John Osborne 1907-1981 *The Editors, Martin Schram*

THE NEW REPUBLIC

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TRB

from Washington
May 16, 1981

Heaven, Inc.

The US corporation was a sanctified institution until October 29, 1929, when the bottom dropped out of Wall Street. Out of the crash came a new world. Now the most determined effort in 50 years is under way by doctrinaire, determined men to revive the old order, to restore laissez-faire capitalism. It sends out messages every day—political, economic, even theological.

Did you realize that a corporation's "creativity mirrors God's," that this is the "standard by which its deeds and misdeeds are properly judged"? This information comes in a 57-page pamphlet from the affluent American Enterprise Institute, which acts as a conservative think tank, publishes books and periodicals, and has a notable Council of Academic Advisers, of which the present chairman is Paul W. McCracken, former head of Nixon's Council of Economic Advisers. Every week the AEI distributes several of its new books or leaflets, many of them excellently done, to news bureaus here. This latest is called *Toward a Theology of the Corporation* by Michael Novak, who is listed as "resident scholar in religion and public policy" and has taught at Harvard and Stanford. He says the corporation stands between the individual and the government: "The corporation mirrors God's presence also in its liberty, by which I mean independence from the state." It is a kind of Heaven, Inc.

The mood in Washington seems to have daunted the disorganized Democrats. Their fall-back position on the budget accepted three-quarters of the proposals for spending cuts even before the vote. They were intimidated by Reagan's economic speech to the joint session on April 28, which gave no opportunity for reply. Under parliamentary rules the leader of the opposition would have been given equal time and debate would have been joined. But the Reagan program for the greatest tax cut in history, with slashes of many social projects for the poor, was a splendid theatrical solo performance, not a debate.

The Reagan program is based on supply-side economics, interpreted by David Stockman, the president's budget adviser, in terms that are close to theological. It includes a 30 percent tax cut over three years. Back in December Stockman and Representative Jack Kemp, Republican of New York, prepared a creepy economic summary urging that "President Reagan should declare a national economic emergency soon after inauguration" and warning of an economic Dunkirk. Economist-philosopher George Gilder wrote *Wealth and Poverty* (135,000 copies have been sold so far) extolling the affluent: "A successful economy depends on the proliferation of the rich, on creating a large class of risk-taking men who are willing to shun the easy channels of a comfortable life in order to create new enterprise, win huge profits, and invest them again." It sounds nostalgically like the books before the Wall Street crash. Stockman called the Gilder book "Promethean" in power and insight. CIA director William Casey said the book would "serve as an inspiration and guide for the new administration."

We are finding by trial and error how far Reagan goes in all this. He campaigned against the Russian grain embargo but seemed prepared to let it stand after the election. But clamor continued from the Republican farm belt, and suddenly Reagan dropped the embargo. This was done without advance notice to Japan's prime minister, Zenko Suzuki, who declared irritably at a press conference that he was surprised and "baffled."

Reagan knows where the votes are, particularly when they include the resurgent right. He sent a deputy counselor of the White House, Robert Garrick, to the Denver convention of the gun lobby, the National Rifle Association, with 1.9 million membership. According to the *Washington Star*, Garrick relayed to them that Reagan is a member of the association, that he favors a bill watering down the already weak federal handgun control act (passed after Kennedy's assassination), and that he is prepared to restrain the activities of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. If handgun owners feared sterner measures after the attempt on the president's life they were relieved.

Democrats don't know how to take Reagan. Can his popularity last? If the economy takes a turn for the worse they don't want to be blamed. They show themselves cowed and meek. House majority leader Jim Wright, Democrat of Texas, called Reagan "winsome" at a speech at the National Press Club. It sounded patronizing. He said tax figures in the president's April 28 speech before the joint session were "just flat not true." He added immediately, however, that "somebody wrote them into his [Reagan's] speech. He wouldn't have said that himself." It was all very sympathetic and understanding.

This benign reaction to Reagan's program isn't apt to continue. Reagan is sweeping up all the chips. His appointment of industry-oriented James Watt as interior secretary and guardian of 770 million acres of public land is an environmentalist's nightmare. And Reagan has diverged from the path chosen by his predecessors in areas like international affairs. It wasn't Carter but Nixon and Ford who began the policy of detente with Russia. Now the Reagan-Haig team is pushing what amounts to an arms race, and something very much like the cold war.

As to the Reagan budget, I think too much importance is being attached by the press to the president's initial successes. The administration's own economists are sharply divided between the Young Turks (Stockman et al.) and the Old Guard (Herbert Stein, Arthur Burns, and the like). The economy is fragile: just last week in the budget debate, the Fed twiddled a few controls and the stock market lost 16 points. Can the Fed control inflation? Must interest be exorbitant? The Fed's prime rate stands at 19 percent, not far from its 1980 record high of 21.5 percent.

Reagan seems wedded to the Kemp-Roth free-lunch idea: cut taxes for the well-to-do and there will be an explosion of productivity, fueled by the savings of the affluent. Orthodox economists mostly disagree: they fear inflation. Who knows? Come around next year. Political Washington is treating this as a short-term political battle but it is far more intricate. My guess is that there are no good choices at present and this situation will linger for a while.

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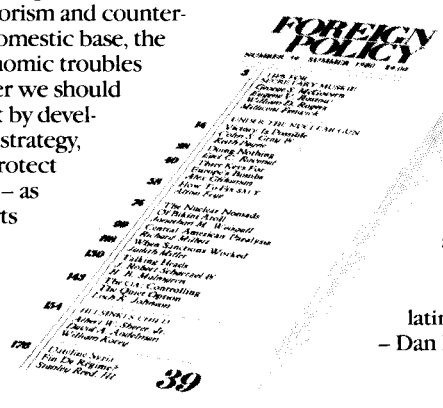

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Correspondence

Non-nonfiction

To the editors:
May I ask for a correction on an error that has become established, through years of repetition, as a "fact" in the literary world? Josephine Hendin's review in your March 28 issue (*Son of Sam* by Lawrence D. Klausner and *The Stranger Beside Me* by Ann Rule) starts with a bow to Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* as "the best seller that ushered in the nonfiction novel." The documentary or "nonfiction" novel was recognized in *Compulsion* (if best sellerdom is a qualification), in the decade before *In Cold Blood* appeared. Indeed, I recall Capote, the one time I met him, coming over to me at a table at the Plaza (not my usual haunt) and effusively congratulating me on my novel. Apparently it made enough of an impression on him so that he decided to go and do likewise.

As Capote is a genius at self-publicity, I watched his claim spread, though without calling attention to its falsity. But when a university teacher of English automatically credits this "discovery" in a serious review on the method, I think it is time the record is made clear.

Indeed, a pure "first" in the use of this literary method would be difficult to establish. There are of course roots in novels by Dostoevsky, Stendhal, and others, notably Theodore Dreiser. Perhaps *An American Tragedy* comes the closest to a starting point in the deliberate use of the method. In 1940, in a novel called *Citizens*, I used the record of the massacre of 10 demonstrators by Chicago police during the "Little Steel" strike of the mid-1930s. In that book I included a "note on method," explaining my documentary approach. So far as I know, the term "documentary novel" was first used by me.

Meyer Levin
New York, New York

TNR gets an 'A'

To the editors:
TNR's April 18 Education Issue deserves high marks, both for the quality of its articles and for its undoctrinaire approach to the achievement of improved schools and colleges. I particularly applaud your conclusion that tuition tax credits would be counterproductive.

There is a vigilante air to the argument for tax credits; it is as if the federal government proposed to subsidize private security forces and armed neighborhood patrols on the theory that local and state police departments have not succeeded in eradicating crime.

Special kudos goes to Dorothy Wickenden, Abigail N. Thernstrom, and Diane Ravitch. I am less enthusiastic about Stephen N. Cahn's "Tangled Ivy." His points are valid, but most university faculties and administrators have long since recognized the problems he raises. Several years ago most educators concluded that "the time has come to reverse that trend," and the majority have begun to do just that.

Donald M. Blinken
State University of New York
Albany, New York

Educational controls

To the editors:
The advantage of private schools, and therefore of tuition tax credits, is not, as John Merrow would have it ("The Tuition Tax Dodge," *TNR*, April 18), that private schools are better (though some are), or more integrated (though some are), or the best chance for disadvantaged children to escape the poverty trap (though some are). The main advantage of private over public schools is that they offer a choice to parents and children about the form and content of education. Private schools may be religious or secular, relaxed or rigorous; some may emphasize progressive political and social ideals, while others emphasize traditional values; and some, as Merrow points out, "will specialize in mischief as much as education." This is their virtue. Parents and children—not the educational authorities—determine what education is best for them.

Schools are like newspapers. Government control ensures that they will stay out of mischief, that they will be "responsible," and "progressive," and in servitude to the values and interests of the state. The opportunity to indoctrinate our children six or more hours a day for 10 or more years—like the power to regulate printed news and opinion—is too potent a form of social control to be entrusted to a state monopoly or near-monopoly. Of course, most so-called "liberal and public education groups" oppose tuition tax credits, for such credits would redistribute power to control education from educational professionals (who, for the moment, tend to be "liberal" and militantly secular) to individual families. That is why many genuine liberals support tuition tax credits, and would support a voucher plan enthusiastically.

Michael McConnell
Washington, DC

All things to all people

To the editors:
The lack of consensus about curriculum to which Diane Ravitch attributes disillusionment with our educational system ("The Schools We Deserve," *TNR*, April 18) has its roots in a consensus Americans do share: that the schools should undertake the whole work of instruction. From teachers trying to function as parents, clergy, and police, we have learned only that no institution can be all things to all people.

William Westfall
Hudson, Ohio

Wilson High revisited

To the editors:
We all have read countless articles on the deplorable state of education in America's big-city schools. So it was pleasant to find buried among many sobering articles on education a nice, optimistic piece by Dorothy Wickenden on high schools in Washington, DC. We would like to believe with her that at Wilson High School "Kids *can* learn." But to this former Wilson student, her comments seemed much too encouraging.

I attended Wilson from 1972-75, and during those years many fights—not "scuffles," to use Wickenden's word—took place outside (and inside) classroom doors. Extraordinary drug deals were negotiated right in front of a local TV station. And an assistant principal, Mr. Brown, was shot and killed over the meager proceeds from a school dance.

Wickenden seems to think that integration is a success at Wilson. Surely there has been some success. But most white students I knew there were seen only with other white students, and were fanatically afraid of most blacks,

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especially blacks in numbers. Cultural differences, not racial prejudices, were at the heart of the problem.

Though certain Wilson students were intensely interested in academics, the vast majority of students learned nothing intellectual. In many classes daily attendance hovered around 50 percent. I had only one or two good teachers, and they took much abuse.

As Wickenden correctly observes, most Wilson students—and I include myself—scoffed at the students who attended the private schools up the street, St. Albans and Sidwell Friends. Sure, we Wilson students say we "learned " something by going to Wilson. But what we "learned" was not intellectual. It was something anyone could learn down on 14th Street in Washington (or 42nd Street in New York).

A final comment: I returned to Wilson during the Christmas holidays last December to check up on my old school. I spoke with my old music teacher. He told me he was going to retire because he wasn't getting any musicians anymore. I also attended an "assembly." There I saw no more than a dozen white students in a crowd of 300. I left the school I somehow love feeling that things had become worse.

John Scanlan
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Taking social studies seriously

To the editors:

In their article, "Blackboard Jumble," Judith S. Siegel and Edwin J. Delattre raise and apparently resolve, at least for themselves, a number of serious questions about the comparative worth of history and the social studies. The authors tell us we must choose between the "rigorous study of the traditional disciplines" which "try to give students knowledge about the past and competence in traditional skills," and the social studies which "are designed to promote social reform," and which "address themselves primarily to topics of apparent contemporary interest and 'relevance.' "

The authors' idealized view of the uses of history and the abuses of the social studies are unwarranted. In the past, the study of American history in the secondary school has rarely "built intellectual strength," or provided for a "shared experience for the nation." More often it was jingoistic, narrow in scope, and an exercise in recall. The "new" social studies texts that have appeared in the last decade have corrected many of those weaknesses by introducing social studies skills that have added a deeper understanding of our collective past. Moreover, the social studies never intended to, nor succeeded in, replacing American history in the secondary curriculum, as the authors suggest. History simply moved over a notch to make room for other subjects and disciplines.

Social studies courses in today's high schools typically include American history, world history, civics, anthropology, sociology, political science, and non-Western history. Surely these programs have purposes other than fostering "social reform" and offering a "quick fix" for social problems.

Daniel F. Davis
Sharon, Massachusetts

Bilingual misconceptions

To the editors:

"Why aren't they all forced to speak English in schools?" asks Abigail Thernstrom in "Bilingual Miseducation." Well, they don't all speak English because many ethnic parents support the transmission of their home language (and culture) to their children. Would Thernstrom say to the six-year-old Navajo that the conquest of his tribe has eliminated his rights to his language and culture?

They don't all speak English in schools because some teachers see the use of the home language in class as a way of reducing home-school conflicts and also as a way of giving recognition to the child's special heritage. They don't all speak English because some of us believe in preserving our linguistic potential so that we can improve our capacity to interact with other cultures and countries. No one doubts the need for everyone to speak English in the United States. Children—whether Vietnamese, Eskimo, Haitian, or Hispanic—need to acquire a literate command of English at school. Bilingual education may assure that children's skills in the home language are maintained in a way that the student can operate with facility in both.

Thernstrom would have done better to provide us with specific suggestions for providing fuller participation in our society of linguistic minorities. The inadequacies of our regular English schooling for non-English-speaking children have been documented, so why not look at some constructive solutions, including different methods of bilingual education?

Charles R. Foster
Washington, DC

Student power

To the editors:

The New Republic deserves praise for subjecting the nation's universities to critical scrutiny. But Stephen Cahn's assessment of the difficulty ("Tangled Ivy") is misleading and one-sided. Cahn gives us a picture of faculty and administration either cowed, indifferent, or acquiescent before students who are capricious and imperious. Policy is made, faculty are hired or fired, largely (or at least too much) on the say-so of self-indulgent know-nothings. And more importantly, the policies that result are thoroughly wrongheaded. The issue of "student power" is, as far as I can see, a red herring. In the first place, it is rare that student bodies can overturn a united faculty. The usual model is one where the students have well less than half the vote. And more to the point, in the overwhelming majority of schools, student power is a transparent joke, extended to matters such as fraternity and parking regulations. In those rare cases where student power is real, more often than not it produces good results, for then genuinely competent students become involved, often offering insights on academic matters distinguished classics professors do well to heed. The benefits of offering students a real (not to be confused with tyrannical) forum for responsible political action surely has a place among our educational ideals.

Secondly, requirements: the business of requirements is a far more complex one than Cahn makes out. They are of dubious educational value. The quality of education is hardly enhanced by stuffing large numbers of unwilling students into introductory classes that are tedious and unwieldly for students and teachers alike. And since college is the only place where the overwhelming majority of educated people ever learn anything in our society (high school being generally worthless and graduate school in the liberal arts being generally impractical) we should not be too quick to overlook the attractions of emerging after four years as something other

(continued on page 40)

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Cover *Drawing by Garland from the London* Daily Telegraph, *March 27. Left to right, Labour leader Michael Foot, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, and Liberal leader David Steel as Laocoön and his sons, with Roy Jenkins as the serpent. Article on page 21.*

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

May 16, 1981

The Syrian Missile Crisis

Syria's introduction of sophisticated surface-to-air missiles into Lebanon has brought the Middle East to the edge of a major conflict. For two decades before 1970, the Lebanese-Israeli frontier had been the quietest in the Middle East. Lebanon was a de facto neutral in the Arab-Israeli dispute and Israel honored that neutrality. In 1970 the PLO was expelled from Jordan, took over southern Lebanon, and turned Israel's northern border into a gateway for attacks on Israel proper. In 1976 that border became even more dangerous. Twenty thousand Syrian troops occupied Lebanon. They put an end to the Moslem-Palestinian-Christian civil war there, and gave Syria practical control of Lebanon and another potential front for attacking Israel. Because this was an intolerable threat to Israel's security, Israel agreed to permit Syrian occupation of Lebanon only under certain conditions: that Syria not cross a "red line" into southern Lebanon, that Syria not destroy the Christian community which is a buffer against potential Syrian annexation of Lebanon, and that Syria not escalate its military involvement by deploying attack helicopters or surface-to-air missiles.

For the last month Syria has been launching massive artillery attacks on Zahle, a Christian city in the strategic Bekaa Valley. And, using helicopters, Syria has seized the nearby heights that control the Christian heartland. Israel responded by shooting down two Syrian helicopters and explicitly warning that it would not permit a Christian defeat. Syria responded by introducing anti-aircraft missiles in Lebanon.

Israel faces a difficult dilemma. Doing nothing means losing control of Lebanese air space. Israel could no longer conduct reconnaissance across its northern border. As a result, it would become vulnerable not only to a PLO guerrilla buildup but to a conventional military threat from Syria. Secondly, acquiescence to Syrian violation of the tacit 1976 agreement would set a dangerous precedent. Inability to prevent breach of that agreement now would inevitably invite further Syrian encroachment on Israel's northern frontier. On the other hand, striking at the missiles would be costly. It would cause casualties and strain relations with the US and Egypt, though Sadat seems eager to have Israel deliver some kind of bloody nose to his Syrian antagonist, Hafez Assad.

The US senses the danger of the situation and fears that the delicate balance in the post-Camp David Middle East will be upset. It has asked Israel to delay retaliatory action pending US diplomatic initiatives to elicit withdrawal of the Syrian missiles. The US is working through the Soviet Union, Syria's patron and arms supplier. The Soviet role in this whole affair is very murky. As things have turned out, the entire incident has allowed the Soviets to reenter the Middle East arena, from which they had been excluded by Camp David. If the Soviets prevail upon the Syrians to remove the missiles, they will ask us for something in return—presumably an increased role in the outcome of the Arab-Israeli dispute. Indeed, it is possible that the Soviets were behind Syria's moves in the first place, in order to create a crisis in which Soviet intervention would be needed and rewarded. Whether or

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not they are behind the crisis, the Soviets are in a position to exploit it. For their part, the Syrians are also demanding a *quid pro quo*. They are demanding that the Christians publicly renounce and cut their ties with Israel. Since Israel is the only source of support for the Christian community (even the Vatican has shown remarkable evenhandedness), the Christians are understandably resistant.

American diplomacy in the next few days will be critical. Philip Habib, a career State Department official, has been sent to the Middle East to mediate. The US position should be firm and clear. There should be no rewards to either the Soviets or the Syrians for violating the status quo. Rewarding the Russians for playing their Syria card or rewarding the Syrians for assaulting Zahle would, as this administration likes to say, send the wrong signal. The US is not without bargaining leverage. It is quite clear to all that the failure of the Habib mission would force Israel to remove the Syrian missiles by non-diplomatic means. Habib should make it clear that the US recognizes Israel's security interest in seeing the missiles removed and that the US would not stand in Israel's way if it decided it had to take military action.

That is called negotiating from strength. It is what this administration pledged to do throughout the world. The Habib mission is a good place to start.

John Osborne

Our colleague, John Osborne, who died last week at 74 after an illness that wracked his body yet seemed to sharpen his mind—and his pen—did not have a disposition you would call sunny. But he was courtly in a way that some older southerners still are. He was also unfailingly correct in his dealings with people here—correct, but never anything remotely approaching intimate or boisterous. Within the proprieties, John Osborne was a grumbler, even a faultfinder. Calling him crusty would be an understatement. It made it easier for us that he more often found fault with himself, usually in barroom vernacular, then he did with his colleagues. He was a seasoned pro—an honorable man in what is still, occasionally, an honorable craft—and he had his craft's susceptibility to the lure of a provocative story that somehow turns out not to be quite what it seemed. But there was nothing typical about the obligation he felt to correct himself in print. On this there was no restraining him. His grumbling was done curmudgeon style—not as an act, however, but out of his sense that journalism was going to pot and the country he loved with an old-fashioned patriot's love risked going to pot, too, in direct consequence, as a matter of fact. Folk like that mutter to themselves, and he did. Each of us, it now appears from talk among the staff since he died, especially treasured his infrequent compliments, uttered in spare, almost grudging monosyllables or communicated in terse, elliptical notes. His praise was as circumspect as his criticism was forthright, and its effect was no less deeply felt.

Those with whom Osborne worked at *The New Republic* were mostly half his age, or less. He was tolerant but not indulgent. Just about everyone called him Mr. Osborne, and that, we suspect, is the way he wanted it. He called us, after months of formal address and a few drinks by way of introduction, by first names, save for the women who, with only occasional lapses hinting at a concession to the more casual and less chivalric ways of the day, were always Mrs. or Miss. He insisted that we capitalize "the President," a lonely and symbolic holdout against our more contemporary and less deferential style, "the president." He had his way. No one was, in any real sense, his editor. He once said that he had been a team player too long. A team player or rather team writer for Luce, he explained, as if, in compensation, he should be free from the small rules by which everyone else still lived and worked.

He was virtually always at work, either at his cubby in the White House press warren or in his office—piled high with newspapers, documents, books, files arrayed helter-skelter, and dank with the smell of old coffee and stale cigarette smoke. In going after a story he recorded absolutely every conversation he had. And he transcribed each of his tapes to paper by himself: he wanted to take responsibility, full responsibility, for what he had learned and passed on. No historian would be more fastidious.

Osborne's scruples are the stuff of journalistic legend, not the legends of the new journalism. He came to these scruples not simply out of fidelity to some implicitly sworn creed of the Fourth Estate, but also out of a special feeling for the institutions he covered. He held the Presidency (capitalized here, as Osborne would have wanted) in something deeper than awe: he held it in respect. We never saw him sadder—he was genuinely in grief—than in those dark last weeks of Richard Nixon's tenure. Some of Osborne's readers thought him soft on Nixon. Those who did failed to grasp his worries, though he did articulate those worries, about the fragility and volatility of democratic politics. In any case, by choice and by temperament, it was not his vocation to join any chorus of condemnation. His distinctive mark in Washington was that he accurately conveyed the complexities of power, and with some empathy for those exercising the power. In that accounting and in the accompanying interpretations, he was unexcelled. This was his aspiration and his achievement. Readers interested in American politics will not soon find another writer, in these pages or elsewhere, who treats his subject and his audience with as much care as did John Osborne.

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The White House Watcher.

Osborne Remembered

One of the things White House officials quickly become expert in is understanding just what is wrong with the press corps that covers them. And so in the Nixon White House, which specialized in that sort of analysis, a presidential aide observed early on that what was wrong with the press corps was that there were not enough John Osbornes to go around. He dubbed John the "bull of the press corps" and he said the rest of us covering Mr. Nixon seemed to take our cues from him. He was right.

That was a time of perpetual thunder and storm in the White House press briefing room. In those days Watergate was only an oddly shaped building and the heated questions and chilly answers exchanged were about the incursion into Cambodia and the bombing in Laos, about Clement Haynesworth and Harrold Carswell and busing and the ABM. The adversary relationship seemed the highest form of art then and it became a frequent occurrence to have the daily Zieglerian incendiaries interrupted by that familiar, soft bass voice that would come rumbling up from a place near the rear of the briefing room. It was a voice still rich with its Corinthian (Mississippi) origins, never forcing its way to the fore but somehow bringing all the others to silence as we waited to hear what John Osborne would be asking and just which way this story was going, which was only a step away from figuring out how we could get there ourselves.

How that voice managed to penetrate at low decibel and command silence without effort is central to what John Osborne meant to the colleagues he worked with and the White Houses he covered. It was partly respect and partly, as the Nixon man said, taking cues. And it was that way, it seemed to me, ever since Inauguration Day, 1969, when we showed up together at the Nixon White House to begin our coverage of presidents.

He never cared much for raising his voice in anger—propriety and common decency dictated restraint—and he preferred to be a silent observer at televised news conferences. But there was one memorable moment, during a nationally televised presidential news conference in the East Room of the White House, when John spoke out with clarity and force. It came after a particularly obnoxious individual who was fond of wearing a clerical collar and bellowing his way to presidential attention had loosed a torrent of "Mr. President! Mr. President!" Osborne finally could stand it no longer, and from his seat in the East Room, he intoned: "Shut up, you bawling jackass!"

Despite the fact that there were a few decades between us—or maybe, because of that—we became close friends. Actually, I was his professional admirer before I was his friend. I became his admirer because of the fairness and sense of conscience with which he went about his job, working harder than the rest of us, the best of blends, it always seemed to me, of effort and excellence and confidence and deference. I became his friend, I have always believed, because I do not snore. White House correspondents at times live a better life on the road than they do at home, what with the fine hotels and the expense account meals; but there are times when presidents journey to places that are remote, lacking, for example, hotel rooms. On such occasions, in Riyadh, built out of the Saudi Arabian desert, or Vladivostok, on the other side of Siberia, reporters had to sleep two to a room. After a couple of trips of pacing and reading instead of sleeping, John mainly devoted his White House years to working whatever scams were required to get himself single accommodation. But when even that failed, he would suggest that perhaps we ought to room together; and so, I always figured, our friendship was forged upon the anvil of an undeviated septum.

Covering the White House alongside John Osborne always seemed to be an exercise in trying to keep up. Although he was working for a journal of opinion, John periodically found himself breaking major news stories. He was pleased, for example, to unveil the existence in 1972 of the "attack group" within the Nixon White House—complete with name, rank, and serial number of all of the presidential aides who were participants in the secret effort to assure the undoing of George McGovern, including the notation that "the members of the attack group are under orders from the President and his staff chief, H. R. Haldeman, to keep their assignment and even the office where they convene hidden from the press."

Most often, however, John was breaking not major stories but major insights. And these, it seemed, pleased him most. His columns were mandatory reading for those who covered the White House or wanted to know of it, and also for those who worked in the White House and wanted to know what their in-house colleagues—superiors and subordinates—were doing for them or to them.

But John's greatest contribution to his colleagues in journalism, I have long felt, was the example of his unfailing willingness—even insistence—upon correcting all errors of fact and judgment promptly and publicly. He probably took more longhand notes, recorded and transcribed more interviews, and read more White House transcripts than any reporter who ever covered the White House. He checked and rechecked facts and impressions. But errors inevitably happen, and John considered it his obligation to publish his corrections—whether in succeeding columns in *The New Republic* or as footnotes in the books that collect his writings on the presidency. These corrections and apologies are classics of professional integrity and just plain good grace. He confessed now and then, in those quiet hours late at night on the road when he would become involved in his quest for the perfect Gibson and his dedication to the principle that a respectable barroom

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deserved a proper closing, that he had an unhealthy abundance of respect for incumbents and incumbency. Perhaps too often, he conceded, he gave incumbents the benefit of the doubt.

That tendency of his led to some of his memorable printed recantations. There was the time that he called candidate Jimmy Carter a "Psalm-singing sermonizer," and then later felt impelled to write: "'Psalm-singing sermonizer' was unjust to Carter and, I hope, unworthy of me." He followed his sharply critical coverage of candidate Ronald Reagan with this assessment of his first fortnight as president: "The populace got further assurance that he is not the ogre that Jimmy Carter tried to make him nor the ignoramus that he's been called in this column."

But there are limits to how far anyone can go in such exculpatory endeavors, and so it was that John took a stand when he found himself embroiled in one of the stickier controversies of the Nixon years—the question of did he or didn't he dye his hair. It was during a political swing through the south, when Nixon was working a crowd in Gulfport, Mississippi, that Osborne noticed that as the president's sideburns became soaked with perspiration, they changed in color from black to gray. Nixon moved swiftly to deny any such cover-up. He dispatched aides to utter denials, and even offered sample hairclippings and an interview with the president's barber. John published their denials at length, and then offered his own addendum: "I withdraw my statement that he dyes his hair. But he does something to hide the gray."

No presidency fascinated John as much as Nixon's, so great were the conflicts within it and the challenges of understanding and explaining them. A quick thumbing through John's observations on Nixon over the years tells at least as much about the way John practiced his craft as it does about the way Nixon practiced his.

On Richard Nixon the candidate, 1968:

> In forty years of reporting, no public figure repelled me as Nixon the candidate did in 1968. With his simplistic distortions, his shoddy appeal to the Wallace vote in the South and nationally, his packaged crowds and the synthetic situations that the candidate's advance men contrived for him, Mr. Nixon seemed to me to go far beyond the bounds of deception allowed to politicians in our system.

On Nixon the president, 1969:

> The study of Richard Nixon, an exercise to which I have devoted most of my time since September of 1968, requires a steadfast clinging to the fact that he is human. That is not easy. Most of the people who work for him at the White House do their witless best to conceal the fact, making him out to be a President who never—but never—succumbs to the pressures of the office and who in all other conceivable ways is without fault or foible.

But after a year and a half, he went on, Nixon had showed himself to be "a stronger man, more decent and credible man" than he had permitted himself to become as a candidate. John reviewed the pluses and minuses of the Nixon presidency, finding praiseworthy the proposed welfare reform plan (from which Nixon himself later backed away) and Nixon's stated intention to disengage from Vietnam. He found these appealing enough to write: "If so lame and grudging an apology for Richard Nixon makes me a candidate for membership in his silent majority, so be it."

On Nixon's incursion into Cambodia in May 1970:

> Retracing the President's road to the current madness in Cambodia is a painful exercise for one who has been pursuaded and has reported, as I have been reporting since the summer of 1969, that Mr. Nixon had a better understanding of the nature of the Vietnam war and was working toward a saner solution of the Vietnam problem than he thought it wise or possible to indicate in public.

And after three years: "Mr. Nixon comes across to me as a President who, in response to the negative view, has constructed a false image of himself and has pursuaded himself that it is the true one."

On Nixon's enunciation of a school desegregation policy, 1971: "It is a pleasure to report that Mr. Nixon has come up with something good." But on Nixon's subsequent press conference statements pandering to school busing foes for the sake of politics that same year: "The low point of the Nixon presidency to date. . . . The politics of the issue are simply too much for Mr. Nixon and for whatever sense of public integrity he may retain."

By the time the fourth Nixon year had ended,

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Watergate had begun. In the book of his collected columns for that year, Osborne called the reader's attention to the fact that in his weekly columns he did not mention the June 17 burglary at the Watergate until August 1972. He added this footnote to a July 15 column: "How, when this was written, I could have ignored the arrest on June 17 of five electronic buggers in the Watergate headquarters of the Democratic National Committee baffles me. Put it down to my reluctance to believe the worst about President Nixon."

And finally, on August 24, 1974: "Thank God, he's gone. I'll miss him and I wish for him the mercy that he doesn't deserve and probably won't get."

Being there was vital, as John saw it, to covering a president properly. And so he was up and down the pyramids of Egypt with Nixon that summer when he sought in vain to stave off impeachment, and there was a news photo of John, at age 69, puffing along on foot beside President Ford's limousine during a swing through Texas in 1976. And in 1979 he felt he had to make it to Vienna with President Carter to witness that SALT II signing ceremony in which Carter kissed Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev on the cheek. But emphysema was taking a toll on this man who had been a heavy smoker for years, and soon there would be cancer. In the fall of 1979 John saw his doctor, who later said he just could not believe that a man with John's physical ailments was still on his feet, much less traveling the globe with the president.

Eventually John could no longer get around. And just this once, the readers of *The New Republic* were the last to know. He continued his column from home, and the quality of his insights and fact-gathering never faltered. He pored over transcripts from the White House of speeches and briefings that most of the rest of us skimmed or ignored. The telephone became his journalistic lifeline. And his writings continued to be a lifeline for the rest of us. His last column, published in the issue of April 11, just days before his death, was a fact-filled analysis of the performance of the Reagan high command in the aftermath of the attempted assassination of the president, including the performance on camera and off of Secretary of State Alexander Haig (whom John first knew as a colonel and an aide to Henry Kissinger in the early days of the Nixon White House). "There is a problem with Haig," John concluded. "He is immensely capable and the country will be the loser if he does himself out of a job."

It was a fitting, evenhanded way to end an extraordinary career. John Osborne has left us all with a painstakingly sharpened understanding of a tumultuous era in American history. And he has left those of us in journalism with a remarkable model of just how the job should be done.

Martin Schram

Martin Schram writes on national affairs for the *Washington Post.*

Alaska's embarrassment of riches.

Cool Millions

Money is trouble, and you don't need Calvinist ancestors to know that big money is big trouble. Consider the sad story of the state of Alaska. While President Reagan's minions scurry around Washington in an effort to convince legislators that less is really more, icebound politicos in Alaska fret about a very different kind of problem: how to spend the six billion dollars or so expected to pour into the 49th state's coffers this year without raising fratricidal tendencies in their neighbors to the south.

The source of Alaska's new embarrassment of riches is oil. The money flows from severance taxes, royalties, and corporate income taxes that the state levies on oil pumped from the Prudhoe Bay oil field north of the Arctic Circle and sold in the Lower 48. The cost of North Slope crude is tied to world oil prices. As OPEC's tariff jumps, so does the cost of Alaskan oil, and Alaska's tribute swells accordingly. Thanks to post-decontrol oil price hikes, the state will receive an extra $188 million this year. But even before decontrol, the state's economists predicted that Alaska's annual share would top $10 billion by 1990.

For Alaska's 400,000 residents, $10 billion a year will buy a lot of Eskimo pies, not to mention schools, sewer systems, social services, and a snowmobile or two. Alaskans, being good Americans, have no intention of missing out on a golden opportunity to prove that money buys happiness.

Last spring, while residents of Detroit were discovering just how much macaroni and cheese a month's food stamps would buy, the Alaska legislature managed to dispose of $3.2 billion, including $400 million in low-cost loans to residents and a special $519-million capital improvements "Christmas tree" for vital projects like convention centers, ski jumps, and cat-neutering clinics. Part of that $3.2 billion went into various fiscal mattresses where the legislature has been squirreling away money against the day the oil runs out. One cache, the Permanent Fund, holds approximately $1.3 billion in oily lucre. Another, a "Rainy Day Fund" devised to protect residents against pipeline shutdowns and such, took in $350 million last year.

In a vain attempt to unload some of the spare cash, Alaska's legislature passed a share-the-wealth scheme that would have sent each resident of legal age $50 for every year he or she had lived in Alaska since statehood. Anchorage residents Ron and Patricia Zobel sued, arguing that the dividend plan unfairly discriminated against newcomers like them. The dividend plan is now on ice pending a US Supreme Court decision. Meanwhile, the Permanent Fund is earning $150 million a year in interest.

If disposing of all that money last year was a strain,

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this year's budget-crafting session should be a bona-fide backbreaker. The first task of the session is to find out how much money the state actually possesses. Governor Jay Hammond estimates it at $5.5 billion, but the ebullient solons say they have a billion more. The second task is to find out how to get rid of it. The Alaska House of Representatives didn't get organized until the fourth week of the legislative session. Now they're facing a raft of spending proposals that if approved in toto would dole out $14 billion altogether, or about $35,000 per resident. Disposing of all this cash has become the legislature's biggest headache, but in the eyes of the citizenry it is among the state's greatest charms.

Residents of other states, distraught by property and state income taxes, may come to find Alaska increasingly attractive as a prospective home. The Alaska legislature plans to abolish local property taxes this year, picking up the tab for local services itself. The state income tax was abolished in 1979. The legislature is planning to provide millions of dollars in low-interest loans for residents who want to buy a home, start a business, process some fish, or open a tourist lodge. Also on the list are $100 million donated for cancer research, accelerated deposits to the Permanent Fund, a bill that would allow state agencies to refuse federal funds and replace them with state dollars, and a move to abolish all corporate taxes—except those pinned on the oil companies. For those who care to invest in oil or railroads, the PACE (Portfolio of Alaskan Citizen Enterprises) program, by which the state would buy blocks of stock in major state businesses and then give or sell the stocks to residents, promises to be a good bet.

ALASKA, last home of the pioneer ethic of self-reliance, has discovered the public trough. Ask H. "Pappy" Moss. This voluble state representative from Delta Junction is a man of note far below the Arctic Circle, thanks to his recent suggestion that the state float a loan to the moribund Chrysler Corporation. "These legislators are like blind dogs in a meathouse," Moss chuckles. "All those glorious smells and they just don't know which way to turn." He has volunteered to lead them in the right direction.

In a letter to his constituents, Moss termed Alaskans "trailblazers for the future of our nation," and pitched his "Alaska Foreign Investment Fund," a corporate financing kitty that would offer Chrysler-type loans in exchange for development in industry-starved Alaska. (Foreign means non-Alaskan to Pappy Moss.) In this year's session Moss is also proposing a five-billion-dollar education endowment fund, the interest from which would be used to pay school operating costs "in perpetuity"; a $100 million revolving loan fund for agricultural experiments; $6.7 million for transportation projects; and four billion dollars toward a massive hydroelectric project that state environmentalists claim is unnecessary.

Moss acknowledges there is a danger that other Americans will come to see Alaskans as "blue-eyed Arabs." "We've obviously created a public relations problem in dealing with the lower 48 states. I hope I don't give our delegation in Washington heartburn. We have to remember this is going to benefit Alaska." That will be small comfort to non-Alaskans, who may find next winter that burning money will be cheaper than burning oil, but Moss is convinced that interstate good fellowship will prevail.

Governor Hammond takes a more pragmatic line. He is a moderate Republican who has proposed some spending schemes of his own, but he has also taken the legislature to task for its spendthrift ways. Hammond proposes a constitutional limitation on state spending and large deposits to the Permanent Fund to stem the cash flow. He is also quick to apologize for the state's good fortune. "While we think it is totally appropriate to share some of our wealth with our sister states in the south, we would like to think we could bring ourselves up to par on some of these other things first," Hammond recently told a small group of Washington reporters. Hammond repeatedly emphasizes that Alaska has the highest cost of living in the nation, that it costs $16,000 a year to educate a child in the remote Arctic bush communities, that many of the state's residents live without flush toilets. Petrodollars, the governor explains, should be used to build renewable resource projects, like hydroelectric plants and barley farms, that can sustain Alaska once the wells are sucked dry.

The governor has good reason to be concerned. Fully 86 percent of Alaska's annual income is oil money, and it's expected to reach 92 percent by 1982. The pipeline, as one state economist put it, is Alaska's economic jugular. One turn of the tap transforms Alaska from a surplus state to a deficit state, once more dependent on federal largess. According to Hammond, the federal government can start cutting off Alaska's federal funding anytime it likes, merely by reducing the state's revenue-sharing allocation. But, he adds, federal aid reductions based on Alaska's new wealth shouldn't take place until Alaska's residents have received the same kind of benefits other Americans have received from their government in the past. The state, Hammond insists, is not "stifling the nation."

But in Washington lawmakers are beginning to complain. Alaska's congressional delegation has drawn heat for the Chrysler scheme. Senators have quizzed Alaska senator Ted Stevens about why they should continue to exempt Alaska's oil revenue from the windfall profits tax, while those same revenues are being offered to outbid the feds on the Chrysler bail-out. Last year's Senate bill to rein in state severance taxes at 15 percent, sponsored by Arkansas senator Dale Bumpers, also caused tremors in the northland. Although Bumpers's bill largely was aimed at Montana's high 30-percent coal severance tax, Stevens and Hammond worried about its implications for oil-

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producing states. A lawsuit challenging the validity of the Montana severance tax is currently before the US Supreme Court. Fear of legislative or judicial restrictions on the right of a state to tax nationally circulated resources further fuels the get-it-while-we-can mentality of Pappy Moss and friends.

Alaska's mad rush to capitalize on its good fortune threatens its image of tough self-reliance. The state is held up as the last frontier of individual freedom both by people who have never set foot there and by people who wouldn't think of leaving. Americans need this unabashed amalgam of romance and pragmatism, whether we live it or dream it. But Alaska's citizen legislature is doing its best to drum every last bit of independence and free enterprise out of the place, pushing easy government money as the answer to every question. Governor Hammond calls the influx of petrobucks a way of "pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps." Others call it government handouts, which, as everyone now knows, are responsible for the demise of the work ethic and the deterioration of America's national fiber.

Alaskans evidently are aware of the evils of the dole. They chose Ronald Reagan by a whopping margin last fall, and gave Libertarian Ed Clarke almost as many votes as Jimmy Carter. Surely they know that when the feds throw money at problems, it heralds the approach of creeping socialism. Why then, when the state does the throwing, is it deemed "self-help"? Energy-producing states are entitled to some sort of restitution for the ills visited upon them when the oil rigs come to town. But Alaska's wealth is being disbursed as middle-class welfare rather than as just payment for the costs of energy production, meaning the federal government ultimately will have few qualms about taking away Alaska's oil money. Alaskans will get the worst of both worlds. They will be loved to death by their own legislature and bled dry by the Lower 48.

Nancy E. Shute

Nancy E. Shute is a Washington reporter for several Alaskan newspapers.

Diplomacy for sale.

Right They Aren't

A Herblock cartoon last week pictured a dozen cannons, each emblazoned with the name of a foreign policy biggie like Alexander Haig or Caspar Weinberger, loose on the deck of the ship of state. The cartoon neatly summarized the current perception of Reagan foreign policy: it has no direction. Even Reagan bosom buddy and dinner host George Will was puzzled. "The Reagan Administration talks a tough foreign policy," he wrote, "but Administration actions are garbling its message." His confusion arises from the fact that the most recent foreign policy decisions of this administration conflict with its professed anti-Soviet, defense-minded ideology. In the last two weeks the Reagan administration has browbeaten Japan into a minor curtailment of auto exports, a move that elicited great resentment in Japan and wasted valuable diplomatic capital needed to encourage Japan to share our defense burden in the Pacific; lifted the Soviet grain embargo, thereby dropping the last remaining act of American resistance to Soviet occupation of Afghanistan; and, in a humiliating acquiesence to yet another litmus test, agreed to sell Saudi Arabia the most sophisticated arms in the American arsenal, weapons the Saudis don't need and that actively threaten US security interests in the Persian Gulf. A baffling performance for an administration pledged to reassert American power, strengthen our alliances, and resolutely thwart Soviet advances in the world.

THESE decisions are incompatible with Reagan's rhetoric. But they are not erratic. What they have in common is that they are all good for business. All grant relief, in the short run at least, to powerful domestic constituencies: auto, farm, and oil. Critics point to the long-range damage these policies will do to America's ability to conduct a vigorous foreign policy. They are missing the point. These deals were made *in spite of* their foreign policy implications. As Secretary of Agriculture John Block bubbled excitedly moments after the lifting of the grain embargo, we now have a "market-oriented foreign policy." What, you may ask, does the secretary of agriculture know about foreign policy? Very little. Most presidents would have listened to their secretary of state. Instead President Reagan overrode Haig's strenuous objections to the grain decision and sided with Block.

The business of this administration, foreign and domestic, is business. And business requires a foreign policy that guarantees international stability, because stability is the *sine qua non* for foreign commerce. That is why, for example, Gulf Oil lobbied hard and successfully to prevent US support to anti-government guerrillas in Angola. Angola's Marxist-Leninist regime and 20,000 Cuban troops may not promote democracy; but, as Andrew Young pointed out, they are a stabilizing influence. And, for a fee, they permit Gulf to pump oil unmolested. A similar fear of instability makes the banks anxious to see "moderation" and "realism" prevail in Poland. The banks have billions of dollars in loans at stake in Poland. The Solidarity Union may give Poland a measure of freedom but it also threatens its credit rating. The banks were cheered when Western nations did their bit for stability by allowing Poland to defer $2.6 billion of debt repayment. The threat of Soviet invasion does its bit for Polish stability too. The

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banks cannot but be grateful for this restraining influence.

The central focus of any truly "market-oriented foreign policy" must be stability, not ideology. And that is how Secretary of State Haig defined the administration's foreign policy in a speech, "A New Direction in America's Foreign Policy," delivered the day after the lifting of the grain embargo. He said we must oppose the Soviet Union "not because of ideological preoccupation but simply because Moscow is the greatest source of international insecurity today." If under President Carter we overcame our inordinate fear of communism, under President Reagan, it seems, we will overcome our inordinate ideological preoccupation with it.

THAT WE should oppose the USSR not because of ideology but because it threatens the status quo is a formulation alien to most Americans, and, indeed, to most conservatives. (Six months ago one would have thought it alien to Ronald Reagan.) Americans support a policy of containing the Soviet Union precisely because they despise the Soviet system and believe that democracy offers dignity and hope. They have always viewed balance-of-power politics with suspicion and distaste, as the product of a corrupt, world-weary Europe. Americans lack the requisite well-bred cynicism to carry on a dispassionate, almost disinterested realpolitik. In Vietnam, when Americans lost the belief that they were fighting for dignity and hope and realized that they were fighting to save face and preserve some great power balance of forces, they rebelled against the war.

Reagan's recent actions are puzzling because he was never from the realpolitik school of Republican foreign policy. Indeed, he led the dissident populist wing of the party against Nixon's and Kissinger's cool and calculating foreign policy. He was scandalized by Nixon's opening to China. During the 1980 campaign he even proposed rolling back the clock with a more ideologically palatable two-China policy. Of course it was an utterly obsolete idea, but it was grounded in the belief that the geopolitical and commercial advantages of an alliance with China cannot outweigh our ideological revulsion against totalitarianism. Reagan's two-China remarks during the campaign horrified the Republican establishment. However, once in office Reagan reinstituted the traditional post-Nixon Republican line. Secretary of Defense Weinberger went so far as to say that a Soviet misadventure in Poland might result in American arms shipments to China—in other words, a de facto military alliance.

What has happened to Ronald Reagan? In California he had a reputation for pragmatism, meaning the willing suspension of one's beliefs in order to get something done. Reagan has made it clear that the aim of the early part of his presidency is to get his economic plan approved. Everything else is subordinate. The one foreign policy decision that is truly consistent with the Reagan brand of populist anti-communism—support for the Salvadoran junta—was ordered to the back pages as soon as the reaction it aroused began to overshadow his economic program. Reagan learned his lesson well from that experience. Just as he has put the Moral Majority's agenda on hold until after passage of his economic plan, he has relegated his foreign policy to the service of his domestic policy.

This administration knows exactly what it is doing. It is in no mood to let ideology provoke untimely squabbles with oil, auto, or farm interests. Reagan talks new right, but he delivers old right foreign policy in the best "what's good for General Motors (or Chrysler) is good for America" tradition.

What's a liberal to do? A generation ago liberals stood on principle to oppose Republican isolationism. Now is a good time again to oppose a foreign policy that gives lip-service to ideology, but is working instead to make the world safe for business. Now, liberals have legitimate arguments about the definition of that ideological principle. The liberal mainstream defines it in terms of human rights; other liberals define it in terms of the promotion of freedom. But they share a belief in the centrality of ideological principle as the mainspring of US internationalism. The Republicans are latecomers to internationalism, and have always been somewhat embarrassed by America's messianic spirit, particularly when it interferes with the orderly transaction of business with tyrants and other reliable commercial partners. An effective opposition to Reagan's foreign policy must begin with the realization that we are dealing not with a blundering but with a calculating administration that sees diplomacy as the continuation of business by other means.

Charles Krauthammer

The *Times* decided it was fit to print.

Jimmy's Big Brothers

"When a reputable newspaper lies," proclaimed the *New York Times* in a stern April 17 editorial on the Janet Cooke-*Washington Post* hoax, "it poisons the community. Every other newspaper story becomes suspect." As these high-minded words were being written, many journalists were remembering a group of stories that appeared in the *Times* itself back in 1964. Written by a young black reporter named Junius Griffin, the stories described a Harlem youth gang called the "Blood Brothers," said to be "roaming the streets of Harlem with the avowed intention of attacking white people." The Blood Brothers, Griffin reported, were "trained to maim and kill." But to the disappointment

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of the *Times*'s titillated, mostly white readers, no known Blood Brother ever did "maim and kill" after Griffin's first article on the gang appeared on May 3, 1964.

There are many important differences between Jimmy and the Blood Brothers. Unlike "Jimmy's World," Griffin's stories were based on a police tip. And Griffin's quotes, unlike Cooke's, probably were not fabricated. But that's not to say they were truthful. Like "Jimmy's World," the Blood Brothers series was an exotic and false insider's glimpse of ghetto life, recklessly encouraged and credulously published by white editors with lurid notions of what ghetto life is like. Both stories were widely believed. The sterling reputations of the *Times* and the *Post* served as bulwarks against healthy skepticism.

JUNIUS GRIFFIN was a good reporter who came to the *Times* with excellent credentials. He had been Taiwan bureau chief for *Stars and Stripes* while he served in the Marine Corps. In 1962 he came to New York to work for the Associated Press. In 1963 he was one of nine AP reporters who contributed to a series on civil rights that was later nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. In April 1964 the *Times* hired him. Griffin's first Blood Brothers story appeared within a month. In a recent analysis for the *Village Voice* of the Janet Cooke fiasco, Alexander Cockburn asked, "Is it so terrible to say that Cooke felt she had to play harder and faster in a competitive atmosphere at the *Post* which would turn your average pirana fish on to valium, and as a black used the social underpinnings of Washington in just exactly the way that makes editors salivate and reach for their Pulitzer entry forms?" No, it is not. Nor is it terrible to say the same of Griffin. This working environment is the fault not of black reporters but of white editors, who hire too few black reporters and are too quick to believe stories of ghetto life that match their own misconceptions. Griffin, who left the *Times* a few months after the Blood Brothers flap and is now vice president for community relations of Motown records, denies that as a black he felt compelled to "play harder and faster." He says, "I got over that in the Marine Corps. I had achieved competing against white reporters at *Stars and Stripes*." But shuttling between the *New York Times* and Harlem, which was his beat and his home (in the days before the *Times* had a bureau there), must have placed strains on Griffin's social identity. To his editors at the *Times*, Griffin must have seemed to possess strange and awful secrets about how the other half lived. As Fred Powledge, then a fellow *Times* reporter, puts it, "Both what happened in '64 and . . . recently was a case of a white-run newspaper wanting black reporters to go out and get juicy stuff."

The Blood Brothers stories probably grew out of a secret press briefing held by New York City police commissioner Michael J. Murphy in the spring of 1964. The Harlem riots were just a few months away. The Black Muslim movement was in full force, and many blacks were rejecting the "paternalism" of "Cotton Club liberals" in favor of militancy. James Baldwin had recently published *The Fire Next Time*, a book on black America that was full of eloquent rage. Tensions between Harlem's mostly white policemen and mostly black residents were heightened by a new "no-knock" law, which was to allow policemen with a special search warrant to enter private homes without alerting the residents. Margit Sugar, a Hungarian refugee who ran a secondhand clothing store on 125th street, had been stabbed to death by six black teenagers. According to *Times* deputy managing editor Arthur Gelb, who was deputy to then metropolitan editor A. M. Rosenthal, the police commissioner told the editors assembled for the secret briefing that the six teenagers who had killed Margit Sugar belonged to a splinter Black Muslim group that planned to kill whites in Harlem. After the briefing, Rosenthal assigned the story to Griffin. (As Griffin recalls it, the briefing took place after he had published at least one of the stories. Both Griffin and Gelb agree, however, that the initial tip came from the police. Rosenthal, who is now executive editor of the *Times*, is out of the country and unavailable for comment; Murphy says that he doesn't remember anything about the Blood Brothers. "That's ancient history," he says. "That's gone.")

GRIFFIN'S first story on the Blood Brothers appeared May 3 on page 43 of the *Times* under the headline, "Whites Are Target of Harlem Gang." One reason the story was initially buried may be that two earlier references to the gang had appeared in the *Herald-Tribune* and the *World Telegram and Sun*. (Both the *Trib* and the *World Telegram* quickly dropped the story.) Another reason may be that the *Times* wasn't sure how the story would "play." Griffin's lead read, "A gang of about sixty young Negroes who call themselves 'Blood Brothers' is roaming the streets of Harlem with the avowed intention of attacking white people. They are trained to maim and kill." Most of Griffin's information was based on confidential police sources. None of the information on the Blood Brothers was attributed. Griffin described mysterious training sessions in the martial arts, noted that the members denied affiliation with the Black Muslims but greeted one another with the words "Salaam alekim," and observed, "The Blood Brothers are making traditional street warfare in Harlem obsolete. The members are recruited from the ranks of the old-line gangs, with the blessings of their leaders. The new gang has no turf—no territory—to protect, and its target knows no geographical limitations: it is the white man." The blunt implication was that Harlem thugs would soon overrun all of Manhattan.

The *Times* printed Griffin's second story on the Blood Brothers on May 6, this time above the fold on the front page. Now the gang numbered 400, indoctrination and training was coming from "dissident members of the Black Muslim sect," and a researcher for

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Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited, a partly municipal, partly federal social organization then headed by the black sociologist Kenneth Clark, was said to have information on the gang "obtained in taped interviews with hundreds of youths in Harlem." Again, no one would go on the record. But the HARYOU researcher was identified as Willie Jones in the next day's *World Telegram*: "Jones had told a reporter he had heard of such a gang, [Kenneth] Clark said, but had also said he knew of no evidence of its existence." Griffin still insists he heard "a couple" of Jones's tapes. There were also tapes, Griffin says, of interviews with Blood Brothers at WQXR, the *Times*'s radio station, which Griffin had arranged. As for the number, Griffin says that the other Harlem gangs had stopped fighting one another. "I was given a tip," Griffin recalls, about "how many were in each gang district. If that had been true, 400 actually would have been a conservative estimate if the structure had been the way it was broken down to me." Weren't there more reliable methods available? "I didn't go out and try to count them," Griffin says. With "the acknowledgment that four existed, and with conditions as they were . . . I didn't think it was a big number, I don't think it's a big number now." But Arthur Gelb says, "In hindsight, I think we should have been more careful about the figure."

The third article in the Blood Brothers series was a reaction story. It ran on page 61 of the May 10 *Times*, and seemed to include the first on-the-record acknowledgement of the gang's existence. "We are aware of this," Police Commissioner Murphy was quoted as saying. "We are keeping abreast of the ramifications and taking certain measures. We are prepared." But Murphy's double-talk allowed for the possibility that what the police were "aware of" was simply a rumor started by a few reporters. Like Washington mayor Marion Barry, who bluffed that he knew of Jimmy's whereabouts and then said the *Post* story wasn't true, Murphy wanted *Times* readers to know that New York's finest were on the job. But he chose his words more carefully. Griffin reported denials of the earlier stories as well. "Dissident Black Muslims" were said to deny having anything to do with "the organization and training of the anti-white youth gang." Specifically, James 67X, personal secretary to Malcolm X, who had been identified in an earlier story as a frequent counselor to members of the gang, was said to deny any connection between the followers of Malcolm X and the Blood Brothers. (Griffin says James 67X feared police reprisal, which is plausible.) Marshall England, chairman of the Manhattan chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality, was quoted at the end of the story as calling the stories "grossly lacking in facts."

The fourth, last, and longest article in the series appeared on the front page (this time below the fold) of the May 29 *Times*. This last piece was more analytical, and much fuzzier on the facts, than any of the previous pieces. The roots of the gang were traced to the Black Muslim movement. But again, there was no hard evidence. "Black-against-black gang fights have disappeared and many of Harlem's youths have found new interest in Africa and its leaders," Griffin wrote. Area studies seemed to have taken precedence over killing and maiming whites. By this time Griffin had apparently given up trying to pinpoint how many gang members there were. "Various estimates have been made of the Blood Brotherhood," he wrote. "First police estimates were put at about 90. [Griffin's first story had said 60.] Some believe there is a hard core of only 25. Other sources say there are as many as 400. A gang leader told this reporter that there were now only 200 trained Blood Brothers, and that each trainee was obligated to train at least 10 juniors." (That would make a potential total of 2,200.) The precise aims of the Blood Brothers were also becoming vaguer. One member was quoted as saying that only the "Black Mollyzuls," a subgroup, believed "in violence and killing whites." The rest simply believed "in helping and fighting back if they be hit first, of course." Given that the membership might be as low as 25, and guessing that, say, half of the membership belonged to the "Black Mollyzuls," the violent revolutionaries might well have numbered only 12. Griffin's story had, at last, been stripped down to the bare bones of fact: the Blood Brothers were just a few tough-talking Harlem kids.

Chuck Stone, then administrative assistant to Adam Clayton Powell, says, "I knew about the Blood Brothers. Everybody in Harlem knew about them." How? "I *know* the black community," he answers. But when pressed, Stone admits, "It could have been just some loud talking." That's the best corroboration one can find for Griffin's story. In *The Kingdom and the Power*, Gay Talese reports that some *Times* reporters called the Blood Brothers story "Rosenthal's Bay of Pigs." That's an exaggeration. The episode is unmentioned in *Without Fear or Favor*, Harrison Salisbury's "uncompromising look at the *New York Times*," but if Salisbury ever decides to update his company history, he might want to call the Blood Brothers story "Rosenthal's Jimmy."

Timothy Noah

Buying bombs with kited checks.

Armed for Inflation

Ronald Reagan has painted himself into a corner. He wants to bring inflation under control, reduce the role of government in our lives, and undertake the biggest military buildup in our peacetime history. He cannot do all these things simultaneously. Or at least not at a cost that most Americans are willing to pay, and not without undermining the nation's economic stability.

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ALL THE NEWS THAT'S FIT TO PRINT ABOUT JEWS ISN'T IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

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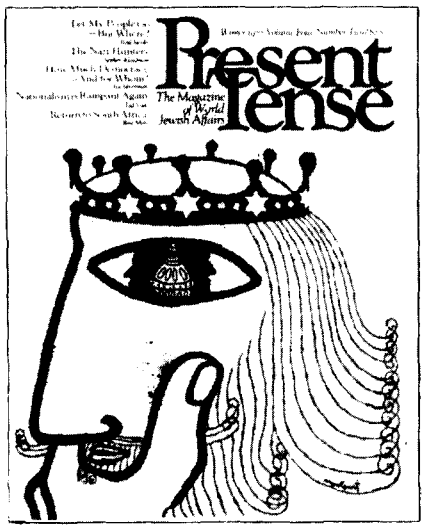

On American Jews: "For the first time in American history, American Jews feel secure enough in their Jewishness and in their Americanism to challenge major aspects of this country's foreign policy." Stephen Isaacs.

On Soviet Jews: "The historic turning-point was the trial in 1970 of eleven foolish, naive young people who hoped to steal a small airplane and fly to freedom in Scandinavia." Murray Seeger.

On searching for roots in Eastern Europe: "Where was my mother's home? Where was the path she must have walked to the Narew River she had told me about? Where was the synagogue and where was the market place?" Sigmund Diamond.

On Jerusalem: "No place on earth offers so many delights to the eye, the ear and the mind as Kollek's Jerusalem, but one must find the time to stand and stare." Chaim Bermant.

On renewed interest in Judaica among young Americans: "The young people perceived themselves as survivors of the failures of Jewish education and the false values of America.' Sylvia Rothchild.

On Israel's Nature Reserves: "It may be that General Yoffe's animals will somehow lead the people of the Middle East to peace one day. But the tanks were in the mountains, waiting. The real beast in the desert was still man." Robert Spero.

On being a Jewish poet: "The truest Jewish poetry will be written out of the inward preoccupations of people who happen to be Jews." M. L. Rosenthal.

On the Persian Gulf arms race: "The ramifications of what is happening... extend from the Caspian Sea to the Suez Canal and from the African Coast to Pakistan." Tad Szulc.

On Israel's Arab intellectuals: "I am an Israeli but I cannot be a Jew." Naomi Shepherd.

On American foreign policy: "American companies, which for so long we have considered 'our companies,' have in fact become the policing agents of the Arabs' boycott against the U.S." Paul Dickson.

On South Africa: "To live with such a system of laws, with certificates of racial purity, with leaders who admired Hitler, to live in South Africa as a Jew and to be silent and happy takes some special skills." Rose Moss.

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PRESENT TENSE

The Magazine of World Jewish Affairs

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The size of the projected military buildup undercuts any serious hope of controlling inflation. Reagan wants both guns and butter, and has tried to pay for them by taking margarine from the poor. The trouble is that there is not much margarine to take. Something will have to give. If Reagan is to retain the electoral support of the middle class, he ultimately will have to choose either runaway inflation or sharp slashes in his proposed military budget. And reducing money for military expansion means reexamining the whole framework of America's overseas political commitments. Reagan will not like this, but the choice may be imposed upon him by the force of economic realities.

LET US LOOK first at the figures. Reagan's budget calls not only for shifting money from the civilian to the military sector, but also for military increases that far exceed savings that can be attained by anticipated civilian cuts. The budget, in other words, is not being cut; it is being shifted and expanded. Money spent on a tank is consumption no less than money spent on a school lunch program. It is also just as inflationary, unless corresponding cuts are made elsewhere. The problem with the Reagan budget, as Lester Thurow demonstrated in the May 14 *New York Review of Books*, is that the cuts come nowhere near to covering the proposed military increases.

Over the next five years Reagan is planning to increase military spending by a total of $181 billion; the defense budget is to be more than doubled, from $162 billion for fiscal 1981 to $343 billion for fiscal 1986. During the Vietnam War buildup between 1965 and 1970, military spending increased by $27 billion, or $59 billion corrected for inflation. So the currently contemplated buildup would be three times greater than the one that took place during the Vietnam War. Whether this is necessary is a question of judgment and sentiment upon which there is sharp disagreement, but even assuming that it is necessary there is the practical problem of how it can be paid for.

Ronald Reagan may want to dismantle the social welfare programs constructed during the past 50 years, but he does not want to lose his middle-class support. This is why he has concentrated his budget-slashing on programs for the poor, while leaving intact the colossally expensive Social Security fund. But unless he taps such funds he will not be able to pay for the military increases he seeks. The gap is huge. He wants to increase military spending by $181 billion, and to reduce taxes by $196 billion. In compensation he would cut the civilian budget by $183 billion. Lyndon Johnson faced a similar problem. He wanted to fight the Vietnam War and build the Great Society. He could have done both only by raising taxes. But that would have been politically unpopular. Instead he chose to print more money, concealing the real cost of the war through inflation. We are still living with the effects of that decision.

Unlike Truman, who raised taxes to pay for the Korean War, and Eisenhower, who kept down military spending through diplomacy, every president since Kennedy has tried to conceal the gap between his ambitious programs and the nation's means by printing more paper money. Inflation was not an unfortunate accident, but the deliberate instrument of the short-term solution. So long as other nations were willing to accept the diluted dollar at face value, we could avoid reducing our consumption to the level of our income. We simply charged whatever we wanted, and our major trading partners, the Europeans and Japanese, picked up the bill because they had a vested interest in the survival of an economic system in which the dollar served as the world currency. Thus our allies, by exchanging hard marks and francs for soft dollars, helped finance the Vietnam War. There was a certain symmetry in this. The first Indochina war, which ended in 1954, was fought by the French and paid for by the Americans; the second was fought by the Americans and paid for by the French and our other allies.

THE SPECIAL ROLE of the dollar brought extraordinary privileges. Some of these later turned out to be compromising and even dangerous. "The excess dollars created to stimulate full employment or pursue internationalist goals migrated abroad to less inflationary economies with higher real returns on money," David Calleo points out in a challenging examination of "Inflation and American Power" in the current *Foreign Affairs*. "America's exported inflation was either absorbed into the national money supplies of our creditors or else went to form a huge pool of capital available to finance the burgeoning 'international economy' of multinational lenders or borrowers." Much of that money, including recycled petrodollars, was invested in unstable third world countries that are unlikely ever to pay back their loans. This flood of capital has weakened the world financial structure, and could bring it all tumbling down. To compound the irony, as Calleo points out, "any serious attempt to reduce world inflation, and hence the liquidity available for unproductive lending, will greatly increase the danger."

The dollar's privileged position could be maintained only while other countries were willing to accept an unending supply, and while the United States was willing to exchange dollars for gold at a fixed rate. By 1971 the strains became intolerable. The American gold supply was rapidly vanishing, and our trading partners balked at the dilution of their currencies through an inundation of dollars. Nixon was faced with the choice of either stabilizing the dollar by bringing revenue into line with expenditures (that is, either raising taxes or reducing expenditures and global political commitments) or else letting the dollar sink to its real value against other currencies. He chose to devalue the dollar.

Virtually overnight the pleasure of Europe on five dollars a day became the trauma of Europe on $50 a

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day. For a time devaluation stimulated exports by making American goods cheaper on world markets. But it did not cure the dollar's weakness because it ignored its underlying cause: endemic inflation in the American economy. The United States continued to run up huge balance-of-payments deficits, exporting its inflation to other countries. This diluted their currencies, causing inflation in their own economies. It also fueled a worldwide hike in the price of raw materials.

Nixon responded to these price increases, like Ford and Carter after him, first with indignation, then with more paper dollars. When OPEC quadrupled oil prices in 1973, the Europeans and Japanese moved to reduce energy use and oil imports. The United States, by contrast, not only kept the price of domestic oil artificially low, but refused to implement a conservation program. In consequence, it increased its oil imports over the six years ending in 1979 by more than a third. How did it pay for those increased imports? By printing more dollars. In other words, through inflation.

THUS IT IS CLEAR that inflation is not an infection peculiar to Democrats. Nor is it imposed upon us by the actions of devious (OPEC) or overly industrious (Japanese) foreigners. Even the rising cost of imported oil has been responsible for only a small proportion of the inflation of the past decade. Inflation is a way of life, a method by which successive American presidents have been able to avoid bringing their domestic and foreign policies in line with the nation's means.

This course has been possible only because other nations have been willing to pick up our bad checks. They did this not because they loved us, but because the dollar was the centerpiece of an international monetary system that, for all its disadvantages, was the only one there was. And they continued doing it long after it ceased to be economically advantageous because they depended on the United States for military protection. They paid for that protection by indulging us in our proclivity for overspending. Thus what Calleo calls our "monetary hegemony" has been made possible by the fact that the major hard currency states of the world (our West European and Japanese allies) and our oil-producing protectorates in the Persian Gulf have been militarily dependent on us.

If this condition produces such benefits, why not continue it? There are two reasons: first, because persistent inflation has undermined the strength of the American economy, and with it the nation's ability to provide for the welfare of its citizens at home and their interests abroad; and, second, because the international system that tolerated it has now broken down. Other nations are no longer willing to accept the hegemony of the dollar. They are intent on protecting their own currencies from the infection of the inflationary policies deliberately pursued by the American government.

This poses an interesting problem. If monetary hegemony (that is, the willingness of our friends to accept our bad checks) was the great advantage of our enormously expensive network of alliances and political commitments abroad, should we continue to pay the price of those commitments now that the economic benefits have been lost?

Are our alliances cost-effective? Does it make any sense to be spending billions of dollars to build an Indian Ocean navy and a Persian Gulf interventionary force when the major beneficiaries will be Western Europe and Japan? They are as rich as we are. If assured access to Persian Gulf oil is important to them, why shouldn't they pay for it?

For the past 35 years we have seen ourselves as protector of the non-communist world. This has been an enormously expensive task, but it has served our interests while flattering our vanity. That task may now be beyond our means. If we try to continue it, in ways proposed by the Reagan budget, we are likely to bankrupt ourselves through inflation and the loss of our ability to compete economically with the nations we are protecting. If Reagan is serious about combatting inflation and revitalizing America, he will have to begin with a fundamental reexamination of the nation's overseas political commitments.

Ronald Steel

Behind the Chinatown raid.

Supply-Side Sweatshops

The Reagan administration, groping for prosperity through deregulation, is well on its way to embracing some of the nastiest byproducts of laissez-faire economics. One of its latest enthusiasms is the sweatshop, that good old-fashioned dungeon where children and illegal aliens perforate their fingers with sewing needles for $40 a week and are kicked down the stairs if they complain. Such Dickensian establishments still inhabit the undergrowth of the American garment industry. Like weeds, they always shoot up again despite all efforts to eradicate them. Sweatshops contravene local building codes (not long ago a young girl was killed in a sweatshop building in New York's Chinatown when she fell down a shaft because the elevator was broken), state labor laws, and long-established federal laws. The most frequently flouted of the latter are the federal child labor, minimum wage, and 40-hour week laws—all of which can be evaded through "industrial homework," the practice by which employers send work home with their employees. Industrial homework is banned by certain federal (hated word) regulations. Last week—shortly after Secretary of Labor Raymond Donovan's well-publicized "raid" on a

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Chinatown sweatshop—the administration announced its intention to take those regulations off.

Some modern conservative economists have always had a love affair with the sweatshop. In his "Free to Choose" television series Milton Friedman stood outside a Chinatown garment factory, pointed out that the conditions inside probably were dreadful and violated several laws, and proceeded to recall wistfully that his immigrant parents got their start in such an establishment. Friedman thinks today's immigrants should get an equal opportunity to experience the Victorian age. He said of the sweatshops' current occupants: "A place like this gives them a chance to get started. . . . If it were closed down who would benefit? Certainly not the people here. Their life may seem pretty tough compared to our own. But that's only because our parents or grandparents went through that stage for us. We're able to start at a higher point."

If Friedman sounded apologetic, the accession of Reaganism to the White House may have emboldened some of his theoretical confreres. An editorial in the March 16 issue of *Barrons National Business & Financial Weekly* was headlined: "In Praise of Sweatshops: Everyone Should have the Right to Work." *Barrons* acknowledges that "sweatshops flout a dozen laws," and proposes a solution: "Repeal some of the laws thus flouted, notably the minimum wage act and the . . . anti-homework rule of the Department of Labor." To justify these recommendations, *Barrons* cites its favorite economic authority, Walter Block. The Young Americans for Freedom recently described this Vancouver, British Columbia, economist as Canada's answer to Professor Friedman. *Barrons* quotes from a Block treatise entitled *Defending the Undefendable:* "The liberals who oppose sweatshops understand the importance of activities between consenting adults in sex and drugs but not when it comes to commercial behavior. To me, a sweatshop is just that, a capitalist act between two consenting adults."

IT WAS a well-intended but misdirected Carter administration move to enforce the anti-homework rules that made it possible for Reaganites to seize on them as early candidates for extermination. Sweatshops are most highly concentrated in such advanced communities as New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, and industrial homework abuses are most serious among sweatshop operators who sew women's clothing in inner-city areas. But in December 1979 the Carter Labor Department chose to throw the book at C. B. Sports of Burlington, Vermont. This small business employed housewives to knit ski hats at home in their spare time. The housewives didn't maintain proper time cards, which meant, prima facie, the company was breaking the homework regulations. On the other hand, the knitters claimed they average $200 per week for 35 hours and they couldn't work if they had to drive 40 miles from their farmhouse to a factory every day.

The Carter administration forged ahead anyway with a major lawsuit against C. B. Sports, charging gross exploitation of the home knitters. And much as Naderites used to swarm around a good product liability lawsuit against the auto industry, three right-wing legal groups soon signed up to represent the industrious rural seamstresses and small-business men against the unfeeling bureaucrats in Washington. An organization called the New England Legal Foundation of Boston became attorney for C. B. Sports. A Washington group, the Capital Legal Foundation, signed up to represent the proprietor of Stowe Woolens, another Vermont factory threatened with a Labor Department homework lawsuit. Dan Burt, the foundation's president, raised the company's case with a Reagan transition team before the inauguration. A Springfield, Virginia, union-baiting legal group, the Center on National Labor Policy, represented a group of Stowe Woolen knitters. Center attorney Michael Avakian claimed no special influence, but the center's board of advisers includes Jesse Helms and Orrin Hatch. The center's director, Baker Armstrong Smith, headed Reagan's transition team for the National Labor Relations Board. Within a month of taking office, the Reagan Labor Department held hearings, in Washington and Vermont, on whether the industrial homework regulations should be changed.

BEFORE the hearings, representatives of two of the conservative legal groups—the Capital and New England Legal Foundations—told me they only wanted the homework regulations tinkered with so rural workers like the Vermont knitters might be exempted from time-card controls. They were content to see controls continue on city industry like ladies' apparel. Only the Center on National Labor Policy (which takes a strident "unions are thugs" line in its publications) adopted *Barrons*'s position on the homework regulations. Attorney Avakian suggested that perhaps all homework rules, including those directed primarily at the inner city, should be eliminated. In the event, Donovan decided to do just that.

Not surprisingly, the needle trades unions produced strong arguments that the homework regulations should remain intact. Some state government officials —particularly a delegation from California, which has strong state laws against both sweatshops and homework—also testified at the Labor Department hearings in favor of even tighter homework and sweatshops enforcement. According to Labor Department spokeswoman Deborah Rubin, even employers' groups expressed support for the homework regulations. Representatives of various clothing manufacturers' organizations told the department that if the homework regulations were eliminated, sweatshop operators would be able to make garments at even lower costs, thus driving law-abiding manufacturers and those with union contracts out of the country or out of business. The largest and most powerful clothing

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manufacturers' trade association, the American Apparel Manufacturers Association, seems to have played no part in encouraging Donovan to eliminate the homework regulations. Indeed, the association recently condemned sweatshops and proposed an industry code of conduct. Donovan's move to eliminate all the homework regulations may spring as much from a conservative and anti-union economic fetish as from a conviction that the move will provide a deregulatory boon to US industry.

It was while this decision was in the works that Donovan chose to appear in New York's Chinatown as part of a carefully orchestrated media event. He was accompanied by a Labor Department "strike force" that proceeded to "raid" a couple of garment factories. "In 25 minutes we found $15,000 in wage violations and three youth violations," Donovan reported afterward. They also found a 90-year-old woman working for one dollar an hour. Donovan told assembled reporters he would lobby Congress for an anti-sweatshop law "with more teeth" in it than the current law. "We're going to keep coming back until they offer people a decent wage," Donovan also promised. Time will tell whether the administration is genuinely schizophrenic on this issue or simply two-faced.

Mark Hosenball

Mark Hosenball is a reporter for the Washington bureau of *Women's Wear Daily*.

Will the Social Democrats be fruitful and multiply?

Britain's Fledgling Party

by Morton Kondracke

London

An American liberal can hardly help but wish the best to Britain's new Social Democratic party. Its stated principles are moderate, democratic, and compassionate, and if it is not yet set on its specific policies, that is about where American liberalism is too: well-meaning, but short of answers. "The task for Social Democrats," the party said in its initial manifesto on March 26, "is to make Britain successful and tolerant at home, self-confident and far-sighted abroad." The party favors increased investment for economic growth, a "flexible" incomes policy to hold down inflation, a "balance" whereby the free market produces wealth and the state redistributes it equitably, "a mixed economy" including both private and public enterprises, less bureaucracy, a better environment, and equality for women and minorities. Overseas it wants to stay in the Common Market and NATO, redistribute wealth to the third world, and seek arms control agreements with the East.

It's easy to be cynical about the SocDem program, begging as it does every question of hard policy choice. And it is easy to laugh at the empty wordiness of some SDP leaders, such as former foreign secretary David Owen, who writes at one point in his 552-page, $27 tome, *Face the Future*, that "what is needed is a socialist philosophy outside the restrictive confines of much of the present polarized political debate, which asserts the radical democratic libertarian tradition of decentralized socialism, which revives the concept of fellowship and community within a participatory democratic society and which sees change not as a threat, but as a challenge." It could be that instead of becoming a real political party, the SocDems will turn into a vacuous post-Fabian debating society, a salon.

Yet they have time to shape up and they deserve the chance. The SocDems certainly are right in claiming that "Britain needs a reformed and liberated political system without the pointless conflict, the violent lurches of policy, and the class antagonisms that the two old parties have fostered." The SocDems lack a concrete program, but what they stand for beats the offerings of the Conservatives and Labour.

In the two years she has been in power, Margaret Thatcher has made a mess of the British economy. Unemployment has gone from 1.5 million persons to 2.5 million (10.1 percent), and analysts of every persuasion expect it to reach at least three million before going down. Inflation was at 10 percent in May 1979. It was up to 22.9 percent last March and it's still at 12.5 percent. Thatcher promised to lower taxes to provide the economy with a supply-side boost, but while she did cut income taxes, she doubled consumption taxes; so with gross national product falling, taxes now account for a 20 percent bigger share of the national economy than before she took over. She promised to cut government spending and in fact has chopped at

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schools and roads, but the unemployment costs of her recession and the need to save government-owned industries from going under (and further swelling unemployment costs) have forced government deficits upward.

What Thatcher has done, monetarist true believer that she is, is keep interest rates high, discouraging exports and making it hard for businesses to borrow. She may have faced a recession anyway, but she has done all she could to make it worse. In two years the country's economy has shrunk by four percent, industrial output has fallen 13 percent, industrial investment has dropped by 30 percent, and the smart money is in speculation. Despite the economic statistics and her government's dismal approval ratings (68 percent negative) and despite constant grumbling in her cabinet, Thatcher vows to persist in her policies.

If she is walking the Tories along the far right side of the road, Labour has marched into a field off to the left, where it is having a loud scrap over whether to head back toward the road or proceed over the nearest cliff. Having lost the 1979 election, it replaced its moderate leader, James Callaghan, with a left-winger, Michael Foot. At its party conference last October, it passed resolutions calling for British withdrawal from the Common Market and adoption of import restrictions to protect British industry from foreign competition. Other resolutions called for abandonment of Britain's independent nuclear deterrent, refusal to deploy US cruise missiles on British soil, and rejection of NATO's nuclear deterrent strategy.

Labour also changed its method of choosing parliamentary leaders, which proved the last straw leading to creation of the SDP. Instead of leaders being chosen traditionally, by Labour members of Parliament themselves, henceforth they will be chosen by an "electoral college" in which trade union leaders will have 40 percent of the votes, MPs 30 percent, and local constituency parties 30 percent. This formula was adopted in a left-wing rush past even Michael Foot, who now occupies something like the middle of the party. Foot preferred giving 50 percent to MPs and 25 percent each to the other two elements of the party. The new system was adopted in the name of democratizing the party but in fact it merely enhances the power of union bosses and local militants while reducing the influence of politicians who actually have to stand for election.

OTHER SO-CALLED democratizing steps include establishment of the party's parliamentary program at the annual party conference (the rough equivalent of our national conventions), and automatic re-selection of MPs by local party members. Re-selection is nothing new in America, where any incumbent legislator may face a primary challenge, but in Britain the likelihood is that the re-selection process will shove the party further leftward.

At the moment, instead of concentrating its attention on Margaret Thatcher, Labour is still preoccupied with internal warfare—notably the challenge of leftist incendiary Tony Benn to deputy party leader Denis Healey. Foot and some prominent union leaders have come out against Benn in order to preserve a semblance of party unity, but Benn's candidacy ensures that news about Labour will be dominated by discord until October. And Benn, though he accuses the press of bias against him and hints of controls if he should ever come to power, is a master at securing publicity. One of Benn's latest antics was to urge the seating in Parliament of IRA hunger striker Bobby Sands, who got himself elected (and recently died) while serving a jail sentence for armed robbery. In the deputy leader race, Benn is expected to attract heavy support from local constituency parties and Healey from his fellow MPs, meaning that union leaders will hold the balance of power. Most journalists and politicians think Benn has little chance of winning, but one shouldn't forget that the pattern of left-right squabbles in Labour for the past few years has been consistent: the left wins.

THE BRITISH PUBLIC thought so little of both the Tories and Labour that just prior to the official launch of the SDP in March the weighted average of seven nationwide polls showed that a center alliance between SDP and the Liberal party would win 41 percent of the vote, to 31 percent for Labour and 27 percent for the Tories. Elections analyst Ivor Crewe of the University of Essex said that such a vote would sweep the alliance to power with nearly 350 seats in Parliament (out of 635). In a long article in the *Times* of London, Crewe went on to point out what a center alliance had going for it. Disaffection from the two main parties has been growing steadily since the mid-1950s, he said, and at a quickening pace since 1970. The number of voters calling themselves "strong" Labourites or Tories dropped from 40 percent in 1964 to 20 percent in 1979. Class feeling too is fading, he claimed, with less than half the electorate identifying itself as belonging to any social class.

Crewe and others contend that the SDP-Liberal alliance has an opportunity to capitalize on the increasing importance of TV in British politics, which has yet to be exploited by either major party, and especially not by fuddy-duddy Labour, which gives the impression of being still lost in the class wars of the 1930s. The Liberals' David Steel is the most popular leader of any British party, and the SDP's top "Gang of Four"—former chancellor Roy Jenkins, former education minister Shirley Williams, David Owen, and former energy minister William Rodgers—are also well-respected figures. Running as a team, they might overcome the Liberals' eternal problem (all too familiar to 1980 supporters of John Anderson in the US)—the electorate's unwillingness to "waste" its vote on a likely loser.

The SDP gave itself a proper media-minded launching, with press conferences and telephone banks set up all over the country. It has the names of its first 43,000 members on computer tapes for efficient direct-mail

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processing. It has begun negotiating with the Liberals to work out joint strategy and it has started setting up local party organizations. It also has a victory scenario in mind that does not require it to win 40 percent in the next election. If the alliance can win between 30 and 33 percent, Crewe figures, it could capture more than 50 seats in the next Parliament, hold the balance of power, and, as its price for helping form a coalition government, push through a proportional-representation law guaranteeing each party the number of seats in Parliament corresponding to its national voting strength. In the succeeding election, under this scenario, the SDP might have a chance to be the top vote-getting party and to form a government.

BUT THERE ARE problems. One key problem is that the SDP lacks an identity, ideologically and politically. It wants to be left-of-center, "radical," and "socialist," but it hasn't defined these terms except in broadest outline. There are policy differences among SDP leaders too. For example, Owen's book disparages Fabian centralism, but two of his fellow Gang of Four members, Williams and Rodgers, are prominent Fabians (as is Tony Benn). Decentralization is a big catchword for the SocDems, but Williams recently stunned a gathering of her friends by asking whether they'd really like education policy to be decentralized as in the US, where one state can spend half of what another spends on each child in school. Williams also favors abolition of private education in Britain, which is certain to turn off voters and other SocDems as well. In fact, there is only one policy about which SocDem leaders agree: they believe Britain should remain in the Common Market. Polls show that a substantial number of potential SocDem voters don't know this and other polls indicate that 68 percent of all Britons right now oppose the EEC.

The SDP has other major problems with its followers. Polls show they are spread more or less evenly across all spectra—age, employment, and geography—meaning that the party has no real base. The minute it starts taking positions, it is likely to offend somebody. And, most seriously, the British electoral system, like ours, is brutally skewed against new or weak parties. In the US, the system is winner-take-all by state. In England it is called first-past-the-post by parliamentary constituency. In 1974, for example, the Liberals polled 20 percent of the vote nationally, which would have entitled them to 127 seats on a proportional system. But they actually finished first in only 14 constituencies.

In 1979 the Liberals got 14 percent of the vote, but won only 11 seats. It's obvious why proportional representation is vital to the SDP, but it is not so clear that the system would be good for the country. Its proponents argue that the need to form coalitions with the center alliance would keep both Labour and the Tories from becoming extremist parties. On the other hand, PR might encourage establishment of splinter parties, as in Israel, or coalitions of splinters (on the basis, say, of Welsh, Scots, and Northern Irish against English) that could lead to weak governments.

Though both sides want it, it's yet to be determined what the SDP-Liberal alliance will be based on. There were Liberal candidates in 576 constituencies in 1979. To form an alliance, about half of all local Liberal groups would have to give way to let a SocDem candidate run. Polls indicate that 65 percent of all SocDems are willing to vote for a Liberal candiate, but only 52 percent of Liberals will back a SocDem.

Finally, the SDP has both financial and momentum problems. It cost about $200,000 to launch the party in March, and the effort raised $850 for the treasury. But election experts figure it will take between two and three million dollars a year to run the party right and six million dollars in an election year. The latest polls indicate a fall-off of initial enthusiasm. Market Opinion Research International found that SocDem support fell from 15 percent to 12 percent from March to April in spite of the media blitz.

WHEN POLL-TAKERS remind voters of the existence of a potential SDP-Liberal alliance, support for SDP goes up to 23 percent. The alliance itself would get between 27 and 29 percent support, enough to give it only 30 or 35 seats in Parliament, just above what the Liberals (11) and SocDems (14) have now. According to Robert Worcester, an American who runs MORI, "The SocDems' problems are a lot like Teddy Kennedy's were. He was a two-to-one favorite until he announced. Then he slid to two-to-one behind." Whether the SocDems thrive or shrivel depends on them, but more importantly on their rival parties. A Benn victory in October might send some more big-name Labourites into the SDP ranks. But Margaret Thatcher's economic performance probably will be the most important factor. It's the prevailing opinion in London that the recession has bottomed. Tory optimists think a graph of the economy will look like a "V," with the sharp upturn coming soon, or like a "U," with a slow period to be followed by a rise. If they are right, the Tories are likely to be reelected handily. Worcester thinks this might not be too bad for the SocDems because Labour voters will figure their party can't win and might risk a vote on the center.

If the economy merely muddles along—if its shape is, say, an "L"—then the situation in 1984 may be ambiguous. Worcester thinks this is the worst case for the SDP because Labour voters probably will hang in with their party even if it has gone wandering in the left-wing wilderness. The best case, he thinks, is if Thatcher fails miserably and if Labour looks dangerously irresponsible, so that voters of both parties are looking for a new alternative. What all this adds up to is that what's worst for Britain is best for Social Democracy—provided, that is, that the Social Democrats have some good ideas about how to make things better.

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Books and the Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on films

A Pair of Spectacles

Heaven's Gate, the very expensive film that made history by being yanked after a week, is now back in a condensed and clarified version. It has been reduced from four hours with intermission to a straight two and a half hours. One bit of voice-over narration by the star Kris Kristofferson has been added, as have several subtitles that explain shifts of scene and lapses of time. The only substantive change comes at the very end. Now *Heaven's Gate* can at least be sat through, and it provides an aggregate of about an hour's pleasure. Its generally failed ambitions are at least now lucid, and its few virtues are much stronger.

Kristofferson graduates in 1870 from Harvard (filmed at Oxford) and goes through a lot of Commencement Day shenanigans that, though sparser now, are still disproportionate to their relevance. All that was needed was to establish that he came from a good family, was well educated, had an English pal, and met a girl. Five minutes, tops.

Twenty years later Kristofferson is the marshal of Johnson County, Wyoming, because—as the added narration explains—he was troubled by injustices in the land. There he is embroiled in the Johnson County wars. The Stockgrowers Association, wealthy and politically powerful, of which Kristofferson's English pal is now inexplicably a member, sets out to murder 125 male immigrants from Germany and eastern Europe. These immigrant families, bilked of the farm lands that they were promised and that brought them here, are starving, and the men have been stealing cattle in order to feed their wives and children. The Association brands them anarchists and lawbreakers (they *are* lawbreakers, of course) and hires gunmen. Kristofferson stands to keep the law, legal process, not to defend rustlers. Christopher Walken is one of the leading gunmen for the Association, and there's a suggestion that he's a renegade—one of the Europeans says, "You look like one of us."

The subject is sharp, hopeless, pertinent. Have hungry men the right to steal? Does a country that wants cheap labor—which means too many people on hand for the work available—have the right to lure the labor and then disregard the unemployed? Set against the ranging Wyoming skies and mountains, this film might have been a hard bite out of American promises.

But Cimino, who wrote his own script, has bogged down his pertinent truth with Movieland cliché. To give his historical-economic drama a core of "human interest," he makes Kristofferson and Walken both lovers of a young French madame (Isabelle Huppert) who runs a log-cabin brothel and accepts cattle, some of them stolen, as well as cash for her staff's services. How Huppert, looking as young and fresh as she did in *The Lacemaker*, got to Johnson County and set herself up in business is something that Cimino didn't pause to explain even in the four-hour version.

Out of this phony, falsely candid triangle develops a cardboard drama that tends to mask the real drama; and that real drama isn't helped by the ever less tolerable, pipsqueaky Sam Waterston as the leader of the Association. But a really grave, basic error was the use of Vilmos Zsigmond as cinematographer. Zsigmond's work has always tended to the gauzy and soft, sometimes appropriately, but always riskily in Westerns (*McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, *The Hired Hand*) where he lays on an aesthetic shimmer that fights the hard material. Never worse than here in *Heaven's Gate*. The general sepia and gold tonalities, the incessant sidewise filtering of sunlight through windows and shutters, the consistently syrupy lighting convert the harshness and immediacy that this history ought to have into prettiness.

Apparently Cimino was so in love with this Zsigmond prettiness that even when the picture was being rigorously re-cut, the director retained one long sequence that aches for excision, a long waltz by Kristofferson and Huppert on a huge deserted dance floor.

The film's very last sequence has, if I'm remembering rightly, been drastically revised through editing. Originally it showed Kristofferson, returned to his social class, on his immense yacht, brooding Byronically on deck, then going below to join his sleeping wife, presumably the girl he had met at the Harvard graduation ball. Now, after a title that tells us 20 years have elapsed and that we are off Newport, Rhode Island, we see the yacht, then we see Kristofferson brooding below deck, with a flashback of the killing of Huppert; then there's a shot of him brooding on deck. No wife. In the new version the Harvard girl is all the more superfluous and the ending a little less callous: Kristofferson is being gallantly faithful to Huppert's memory.

As an actor Kristofferson is like a sausage machine, grinding it out, but it's a tasty macho product. Walken is helped by the condensation of the film, chiefly because his one big love scene was cut. I'm a tremendous admirer of

Films Worth Seeing

From Mao to Mozart: Isaac Stern in China. This absorbing documentary concentrates on the virtuoso's dealings with students rather than his own performances. Culturally enlightening.

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Oblomov. Goncharov's great novel gets somewhat restructured but essentially empathic treatment from Soviet filmmakers.

SK

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Walken's talent, but overt sexual passion is not his strongest screen asset. The original version had a scene in which he sat next to Huppert on her bed, leaned over, and kissed her bare back. I thought it must have frozen her. The conjunction of Kristofferson and Walken raises yet again the star versus actor question. A valid star need not be much of an actor—e.g., Kristofferson. A good actor may not be real star material—e.g., Walken. Comparison between the two as artists cannot be made: Walken is an artist, Kristofferson is an attractive person. But as Walken showed in *Dogs of War* and again here, he may lack the sheer width of personality and heat of sexual attraction to be a star. In the theater, where acting itself can supersede certain innate personality limitations, Walken has shown in plays as various as *Sweet Bird of Youth* and *Measure for Measure* and *The Sea Gull* that he can choose his territory and inhabit it. In film, the ranges—for leading men, not character actors—tend to be somewhat narrower. The camera likes, needs, to do some of the creating that the actor does on stage. On screen, Walken's characteristics and personality may make him more effective when he is not central, which is the case here and in *The Deer Hunter*, than when he has to carry the film, as in *Dogs of War*.

In any case, a long bore has been converted into a tolerable non-success.

Lion of the Desert is another very expensive action picture of a very different period. This is about the war of annihilation conducted against the Bedouins of Libya by the Italians under Mussolini. It began before him: the Italians took Libya from the Turks in 1912 and used it as a colony for their expanding population, then had varied experiences—mostly bad—in governing and settling the country. When Mussolini took power in 1922, he determined to settle the Libyan mess. Eventually he handed the problem over to General Badoglio (never glimpsed in this film) and General Graziani (played by Oliver Reed). The result was atrocious butchery. (See *Mussolini's Roman Empire* by the preeminent historian of Italy, Denis Mack Smith.)

The script of *Lion of the Desert* by H. A. L. Craig describes the Italian-Bedouin war with great, if tempered, accuracy. (Drew Middleton, in the *New York Times*, April 27, 1981, praises the accuracy although he points out that the Italians are blackened a bit and the Bedouins gilded a bit.) The leader of the Bedouins, military and spiritual, was Omar Mukhtar, a man in his 70s, played with exceptional calm strength and utter conviction by Anthony Quinn. Reed has forceful fascist pomp as Graziani, Raf Vallone is moving as a torn Italian colonel. John Gielgud is a Bedouin contemporary of Mukhtar's, politically opposed. Rod Steiger plays Mussolini a touch more buffoonishly than Jack Oakie did in *The Great Dictator*. The picture was well photographed by Jack Hildyard. The director and producer was Moustapha Akkad, unknown to me but obviously Arab, who handles the film with complete confidence—no particular distinction but perfectly adequate narrative clarity and pace.

This competent professional work tells a story of brave resistance to immense tyranny because it *is* tyranny, because the patriots feel they have a right to their land and their rule of it. From Thermopylae to Afghanistan, such stories are still, in this most jaded of eras, thrilling. "Of brave men the whole earth is a tomb," said Thucydides, and I cannot see why this applies any less to Mukhtar and his compatriots than to the Resistance fighters of World War II. But *Lion of the Desert* is about the courage of Bedouins—Arabs, Moslems—and in the US it's now a bad time, apparently, to show admiration for *their* courage.

Vincent Canby, reviewing the film for the *New York Times* (April 17, 1981), sets the tone of his response early by saying "there are the obligatory sequences involving bereaved Arab mothers and orphaned children." Later Canby says: "It cannot be a coincidence that [Mukhtar's] carefully stressed beliefs in a fundamental kind of Islam evoke the image of Muammar el-Qadaffi of Libya, where most of the film was shot, nor that the Libyan leader sees himself as the leader of that part of the Moslem world that rejects the international policies of someone like President Anwar el-Sadat of Egypt." There is not one scrap of intimation in this film to implicate Mukhtar with the pro-terrorism, anti-Westernism, and anti-Semitism of Qaddafi. All Mukhtar wants to do is to resist foreign intervention. He is a devout Moslem, but whatever "fundamental kind" means, there is no bloody zeal in his faith. As shown, he is no more, or less, of a Moslem than Sadat.

Canby also says that the film occasionally "seems to be drawing parallels between Mukhtar's position in the Arab world and that of Yasir Arafat, chair-

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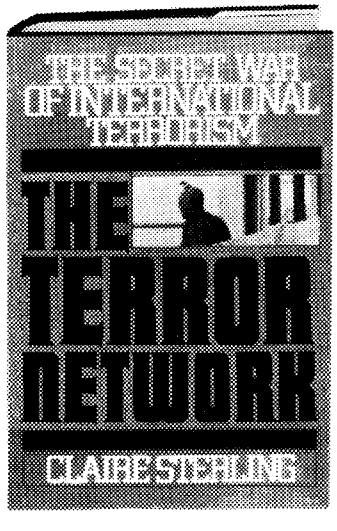

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man of the Palestine Liberation Organization, as when the Italians refuse to negotiate with Mukhtar on the grounds that he, like Mr. Arafat, does not represent an independent nation." Why this should draw more of a parallel with Arafat than with the British refusals to deal diplomatically with Northern Irish Catholics is comprehensible but not logical. Nor does the quiet dignity of Mukhtar remotely suggest the Arafat who strode into the UN General Assembly with a revolver on his hip—and was listened to.

Canby says further: "I suspect also that the movie wouldn't be unhappy if we should equate the camps the Italians put the Bedouins into [seen both recreated and in newsreel clips] with the Palestine refugee camps in Lebanon and even the Nazi concentration camps, though there are no gas ovens in sight in the film." Perhaps no gas ovens were shown because none were used in Libya; but why does Canby have to "suspect" the reference with such ungullible cleverness? Why shouldn't a film made from an Arab view imply a reference to the Palestinian camps? (Though I'm not aware of any cruelties in those camps distantly like the practices in these Italian camps for Bedouins.) The reference to German camps—a more appropriate adjective than Nazi—seems to me quite in order; and it wouldn't be out of order if some of us remembered the camps built by the British in South Africa during the Boer War, though again the British didn't touch Italian cruelty. The real point is: why are those references to be "suspected"?

My hopes for the survival and prosperity of Israel are possibly even as strong as Canby's. Certainly *Lion of the Desert* was made at this time because of its pro-Arab resonances. But haven't Arabs the right to make films out of Arab motives? To have them reviewed with some equity? Are great heroism and great suffering for beliefs to be sneered at because they are Arab? I'm glad that the *New York Times* published Middleton's article, supporting the veracity of the film, within 10 days of Canby's review. Canby said that *Lion of the Desert* is "probably a film from which one will take just what one took into it." He certainly proved the point about one viewer.

Akkad's action spectacle is a more cogent and mature work than the recut *Heaven's Gate*. And it's salutary viewing for lovers of Italy and supporters of Israel, to both of which groups I belong.

The robot in the Western mind.

Tools and Monsters

by Mark Crispin Miller

"Robots made to look like human beings were soon forgotten with the war of 1939," write Alfred Chapuis and Edmond Droz at the conclusion of their *Automata* (1958). "Today the robot is essentially an *automatic machine*." Yes and no. As far as the corporate sector is concerned, this statement is accurate: GE, Westinghouse, Toyota, Chrysler, Western Electric, Texas Instruments, IBM, and others have begun using thousands of "steel collar workers" that don't goof off, get sick, or "look like human beings." "What this amounts to," according to a recent *Time* cover story, "is nothing less than a robot revolution." These punctual machines, "considerably more versatile than their simple-minded predecessors of just two years ago," claims another cover story in *Business Week*, "could displace 65% to 75% or more of today's factory work force."

On the other hand, robots that resemble men are still more famous than their working-class relations. For most people, the word "robot" refers, not to gadgets that weld or sort, but to machines that look like human beings. Centuries before Karel Čapek's play *R.U.R.* (1920) gave them their name (from the Czech *robota*, for "*corvée*," the term of labor a serf owes his master), these creatures exerted an intense fascination, haunting the myths of antiquity and the Middle Ages: Daedalus built statues that could move; Hephaistos, the *Iliad* tells us, was attended by two golden automata "in appearance like living young women"; Albertus Magnus had a robot servant which Thomas Aquinas piously wrecked. This fascination has never disappeared, and even took on a new cultural significance after the release of *Star Wars* (1977), which seemed to trigger a pervasive cult of robotism. Indeed, as humanoid robots began to appear in films, TV shows, ads, and gift books, their gestures mimicked by disco dancers and New Wave musicians, it seemed that American culture too was going through "nothing less than a robot revolution."

There must be some connections, however oblique or deep-seated, between the renewed popularity of humanoid robots and the rise of their industrial counterparts. However, recent writings on the subject tend to belittle the significance of imaginary robots, suggesting that, as we enter this new Industrial Revolution, we have to put away such childish things. *Time*'s story, for instance, includes a short and derisive history of humanoid robots, under the title "Demons and Monsters," and in *The Robot Book* Robert Malone refers to legendary robots as "mere containers for old-fashioned thinking," which is the same message that appears in several other recent books.

While such dismissals may seem quite enlightened, they actually promote a sort of technocratic boosterism, implying that *real* robots are good for you and me, since they are nothing like the golem or HAL (the jealous computer from *2001*) or Frankenstein's monster, fantastic creatures with no factual basis. The fear of robots, we are told, is merely a vestige of that Fear of the Unknown which kept our prehistoric ancestors grunting in terror and living without television. It is a simplistic notion. The fear of robots is no crude superstition, but a psychological response with a complex history. Moreover, the humanoid robots of film and literature bear much subtle relevance to the real robots that are now building cars, refrigerators, aircraft, and more robots.

Of course, the two types of robots tend to inspire very different kinds of feelings. The industrial robot is without charisma. It warms the corporate heart for purely utilitarian reasons: "improved productivity, faultless performance, and lower labor costs," as *Business Week* puts

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it. Among adults, the humanoid robot inspires, in general, either horror or amusement. In *Human Robots in Myth and Science* (1966) John Cohen writes that "we laugh when a true robot behaves like a man, and the closer the resemblance the more comical we find the situation." On the other hand, Jasia Reichardt, in her recent *Robots: Fact, Fiction and Prediction*, describes some experiments which suggest that the opposite is true: the closer the resemblance, the eerier do the robot's motions seem, particularly when the robot's status is unclear. "When an artificial arm of the most complex type . . . suddenly stops functioning," for instance, "this creates a feeling of unease in those who witness it."

These observations are in fact complementary: the fear and the laughter are expressions of the same surprise. Whether we applaud the precocious chatter of the ventriloquist's dummy or recoil from the golem's lumbering advance, we are responding to the same bizarre transgression. In either case, an object breaks out of immobility and apes us with a startling insolence. Whether this event is comic or horrific depends on the limits of the object's strength. When the mimicking thing is undersized and clearly dependent, its performance meant to please, we laugh at its presumptuous weakness, and the more presumptuous, the more comical we find the situation: the sarcastic dummy, the passionate marionette, *Star Wars*'s C-3PO fussing at his masters. Such comedy, however, borders on the dreadful. Once the creature ceases to be dependent, its cleverness "creates a feeling of unease in those who witness it"; the phrase "clever mechanism" no longer refers to the inventor's talents, but to the thing itself, with its unnatural abilities and its will to power. Thus the ventriloquist's dummy turns monstrous once it appears to take command, as in so many films and television shows; and the full-sized, autonomous robot, approaching humanity as if on equal terms, is never funny, because it seems intent on taking over absolutely, irreversibly.

The robot would "take over" not like a mere human conqueror, making threats and giving orders, but like a vampire, incorporating all our qualities into itself. Our strengths and energies drain into it, leaving us weak; it grows as we shrivel. Rather than some arbitrary prejudice, the fear of robots is an apprehension of gradual displacement.

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It arose along with the Industrial Revolution, perhaps as a psychic reaction to that overwhelming event, with all its philosophical and sociopolitical effects.

Although it did not become manifest until the early 19th century, the fear of displacement was convolved with a much older kind of uneasiness: that the author of artificial life trespasses, like Prometheus and Faust, on divine prerogative. In *R.U.R.*, old Rossum the scientist "wanted to become a sort of scientific substitute for God," and so found out the secrets of creating robots. Rossum's antecedent is Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, who, in preparing to construct his early android, "disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame." When the scientist commits this sin, his robots often punish him with insurrection: "Like negroes, these powers own man sullenly; mindful of their higher masters; while serving, plot revenges." Thus Melville describes the robot's just rebelliousness in the epigraph to "The Bell-Tower" (1855), in which a massive automaton finally kills its proud inventor, Bannadonna, with a mighty hammer blow. Bannadonna tries "to rival [nature], outstrip her, and rule her," and his illicit creature pays him back for the blasphemy.

This situation has become formulaic. Although the overreaching scientist is still a commonplace in dystopian science fiction, the robot is now less compelling as a scourge of God than as a monster working on its own obscure behalf. Though it still seems a dangerous slave, its tactics have become more sophisticated: it triumphs, not by outright mutiny, but through perfect service. Attended in every way by competent gadgets, man will lose his defining ruggedness and dwindle into "an affectionate machine-tickling aphid." Thus the anti-technologist in Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872) uses those images of radical displacement that recur in so many influential works: H.G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* (1896), whose Martian invaders huddle like gigantic slugs in the cabins of their "walking engine[s] of glittering metal"; E.M. Forster's "The Machine Stops" (1909), whose heroine, inhabiting a comfortable subterranean cell, is "a swaddled lump of flesh . . . with a face as white as fungus"; Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), in which two vacuous astronauts are bested by a computer that is more "human" than they are.

Thus the fear of robots suggests the master's distrust of his capable slaves. Because the robot seems to get stronger and smarter as we decline, moreover, this fear also recalls the parent's terror or resentment of his growing child. "The dread of our actual children," writes Simon O. Lesser, in an essay on our feelings about robots, "arises basically from the fact that our early authority over them stems in part from our superior strength and from the realization that we wane as they wax in strength." This may further explain the peculiar horror that pervades those stories of power-hungry dummies and dolls, puppets that want to pull their owners' strings. Like children, these little things start out as our creatures, then suddenly appear as rivals.

In his essay on the uncanny, Freud suggests that the fear of robots might be based on the expectation of yet another startling reversal. "The 'uncanny' is that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar." Once we repress some comforting childhood fantasy, its seeming recurrence is a dreadful thing. "The impression made by wax-work figures, artificial dolls and automatons," for example, may be the chilling repetition of an earlier, happier experience: "We remember that in their early games children do not distinguish at all sharply between living and lifeless objects, and that they are especially fond of treating their dolls like people." The child regards this "living doll" as his protective double; "and when this stage has been left behind the double takes on a different aspect. From having been an assurance of immortality, he becomes the ghastly harbinger of death."

Each of the robot's possible prototypes—the slave, the demanding child, the returning double—evinces the implacable resentment that we project onto the dead, who, we believe, "are discontented and full of envy for those they have left behind," writes Elias Canetti. "They try to take revenge on [the living] . . . simply because they themselves are no longer alive."

The robot seems an active mimic of mortality. Its humanoid motions look like cruel parody, as if an athlete were mocking a cripple: its physique is incorruptible, yet it walks like a corpse shocked back to life. And as it totters forward, stiff-necked, on rigid limbs, it wears a look of fixed surprise, which has a doubly uncanny effect: it recalls

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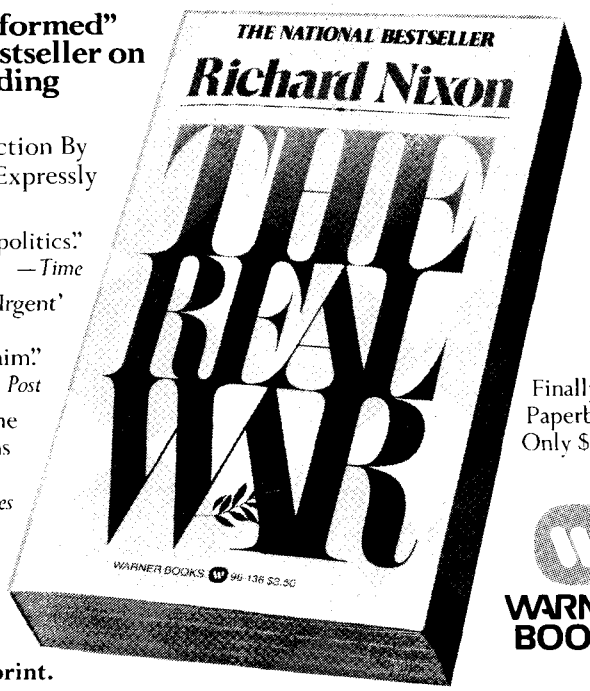

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that expression of terminal bewilderment that often freezes the features of those who die suddenly; and it reflects our own cold horror at its unnatural approach, and—by extension—at approaching death. Our dread of the robot is a foreboding of our own annihilation, the end of that long, slow process of displacement.

THIS EXPECTATION of displacement is so familiar that it comes as a surprise to find that its origin is fairly recent. "The fact of any human being doing anything in association with those lifeless figures which counterfeit the appearance and movements of humanity," admits a character in E. T. A. Hoffman's "Automata," "has always, to me, something fearful, unnatural, I may say terrible, about it." Such a response must have seemed quite modern when Hoffman's story was published in 1815, for throughout the previous century, humanoid automata (known as *androides*) seem to have inspired admiration rather than dread, at least among their educated viewers.

"What finesse in all this detail: What delicacy in all the part: of this mechanism!" Thus Diderot, in the *Encyclopédie* (1751), praises the mechanical flutist built by Jacques de Vaucanson, the most famous of automatists. Vaucanson had first displayed his flutist in 1738, and soon produced two other robots, a "man" that played a tabor and a shepherd's pipe, and a celebrated duck that had all of Paris quacking. The flutist, Condorcet writes in his eulogy of Vaucanson (1782), soon attracted "the curiosity of a world more eager for novelty than sensitive to great talents, inspiring either enthusiasm or disdain," until "the Academy of Science was ordered to examine the automaton," and found that Vaucanson had imitated Nature "with an exactness and perfection which those men most accustomed to the prodigies of art had not imagined possible."

If such machines provoked any displeasure, it was contempt rather than fear, since the *androides* seemed, to some, mere complicated trifles. In *The Rambler*, Dr. Johnson answered this dismissal, arguing that "the movements which put into actions machines of no use but to raise the wonder of ignorance, may be employed to drain fens, or manufacture metals, or assist the architect, or preserve the sailor."

Throughout the 18th century, the automaton's similarity to its worldly observers was unfrightening, and probably reassuring. Because technology had not yet cast its gigantic shadow, the automaton appeared, not as an invader from the world of machines, but as the exquisite fulfillment of Mechanism. Its popularity was coterminous with the influence of Descartes and Newton, and embodied the promise of that influence. Just as man was, in Descartes's phrase, "a machine made by the hand of God," so was the automaton an exact and wondrous creature.

Even as an atheistic doctrine, Mechanism could be a source of comfort. Whereas Descartes had called only the human body a machine, excepting mind and soul from mechanism (thereby reducing all other animals to automata), La Mettrie went all the way in his *L'Homme machine* (1748), calling man "a collection of springs which wind each other up," independent of God. This atheism was only nominal, however; La Mettrie, like Holbach and Voltaire, and like many deist and Christian philosophers of that era, often admired the created order with a religious fervor.

But once God's disappearance was felt rather than hypothesized, the automaton no longer represented an ideal of benevolent creation; it hardened into an ugly, chugging thing. This change was one reflection of the death of God, of a new disbelief in the order of the universe. In 1779 Hume could delight in the notion of the world as "one great machine, subdivided into an infinite number of lesser machines," all of which, "and even their most minute parts, are adjusted to each other with an accuracy, which ravishes into admiration all men, who have ever contemplated them." Half a century later, Carlyle saw the universe as "one huge, dead, immeasurable Steam-engine, rolling on, in its dead indifference, to grind me limb from limb." Whereas Hume took comfort in measuring the "accuracy" of his world's construction, Carlyle despaired that the mechanical universe was "immeasurable"; and while Hume's model spins and hums in place, Carlyle's roars forward like a railroad train. It is as if Vaucanson's flutist had suddenly pulled its feet free from the pedestal and stomped amidst its panicked audience, swinging its flute like a club. After representing God's grand order in miniature, the automaton was now a reckless microcosm of the empty universe. From having been an assurance of immortality, it had become a ghastly harbinger of death.

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It now seemed to represent a proliferating enemy. As a noble simulacrum, it had seemed an ingenious *hommage* to God and man: its mechanical nature was subordinate to this humanistic purpose. The Industrial Revolution and the rise of capitalism, however, changed the face of the machine. As those in power became increasingly remote, their dominance increasingly abstract, the machine began to seem inimical, even willful. It appeared to act without a master, and made the worker superfluous. "There are two laws discrete,/ Not reconciled—" wrote Emerson in 1847, "Law for man and law for thing:/ The last builds town and fleet, But it runs wild,/And doth the man unking." "So soon as the handling of [a] tool becomes the work of a machine," wrote Marx, "the workman becomes unsaleable, like paper money thrown out of currency by legal enactment." The automaton epitomized this rampant technology; it now seemed subversive, itself an indispensable worker intent on breaking loose.

What had seemed charming now recurred, uncannily, as something grotesque. That "exactness and perfection" applauded by Condorcet's contemporaries was now transmogrified into an imperturbable precision that unsettled some of its observers. In Hoffman's "The Sand-Man" (1815), everyone admires the features of the automaton Olimpia, and yet "there was something stiff and measured in her gait that made an unfavorable impression upon many." Poe's narrator in "The Man That Was Used Up" (1839), although impressed by the handsome General John A. B. C. Smith, is worried by "the primness, not to say stiffness, in his carriage," the "rectangular precision attending his every movement." (The general turns out to be a mere assemblage of prosthetic parts.)

Although missing from the Gothic novels of the 18th century, the man-made man now becomes, in the 19th century, notorious as an object of terror. "I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out," writes Mary Shelley in 1831, describing the vision that fathered *Frankenstein* (1818), "and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion." This is the involuntary motion of the corpse, jerking awake without "finesse." And Wordsworth, listing the displays at Bartholomew Fair in *The Prelude* (1805-06), includes some inorganic automata among the other horrors: "The Bust that speaks, and moves its goggling eyes,/The Wax-work, Clock-work, all the marvellous craft/Of modern Merlins, wild Beasts, Puppet-shows,/All out-o'-the-way, far-fetch'd, perverted things. . . ."

The automaton's sudden uncanniness found further expression in the word "automaton" itself, which, at the turn of the 18th century, took on a sinister new meaning. Since the early 17th century, the word had been used neutrally, and contradictorily. An automaton was either something self-contained and/or self-motivating (an organism, a perfect literary work), or something only seemingly self-motivating, with its real source of power outside itself (a clock, a wind-up toy, God's universe). Now, from the latter meaning, the word took on a new import, plaintive or derogatory, suggesting what we call "dehumanization": it now referred specifically to the human being reduced to mechanism.

"Do you think I can stay to become nothing to you?" Jane Eyre asks Rochester. "Do you think I am an automaton?—a machine without feelings?" By the time *Jane Eyre* was published in 1847, "automaton" had become synonymous with "slave," connoting the dispiriting effect of subjugation. In his account (1796) of the black revolt in Surinam, John Gabriel Stedman describes "a drove of newly-imported negroes . . . [about] to be sold for slaves": "The whole party was such a set of scarcely animated automatons, such a resurrection of skin and bones, as forcibly reminded me of the last trumpet" (which also points up the robot's cadaverous character).

This fearful new conception of the humanoid machine persisted well into this century. Having begun with the industrialization of the West, it continued to accompany that process, as an indirect response to the powerlessness that accompanies relentless technological expansion. In the pulp magazines of the 1920s and 1930s, in films made through the 1960s, and in countless comic books, dime novels, and television shows, the robot almost always seemed malevolent. In its various styles it has represented different manifestations of technology. For instance, the robots of 19th-century American fiction often resemble locomotives, and, in the science fiction films of the 1950s, robots are mighty servitors that "fall into the wrong hands" and wreak havoc, thus suggesting nuclear weaponry. Some robots display the seductive regularity of the assembly line, and others glide forward, devastating everything before them, like armed tanks. Such robots have had a complex symbolic function: to epitomize a menacing technology, and at the same time to reflect the human being swallowed up by that technology.

These creatures now seem old-fashioned. They belong to the "Machine Age," that period throughout which "progress" has occurred as a series of spectacular inflictions, like the repeated onslaughts of barbarian hordes: millions uprooted, factory towns spreading darkness, railroads shattering the wilderness, shopping malls everywhere. Loud, bulky, and voracious, machines have seemed to *invade* the world, and the robot, a clanking bully, was created in their image. Now that we have moved

UPON THE LAST DAY OF HIS FORTY-EIGHTH YEAR

Scritch, scratch, saith the frozen spring snow,
not near enough this season or the last,
but still a skin for skiing on, with care.
At every shaky turn into the fall line
a hundred eighty pounds of tired blood
and innards weakly laced with muscle seek
to give themselves to gravity and ruin.
My knees, trembling with old reflex, resist

and try to find the lazy dancer's step
and pillowed curve my edges flirted with
when I had little children to applaud me
and life seemed endlessly flexible. Now,
my heavy body swings to face the valley
and feels the gut pull of steep maturity.

John Updike

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into the "Cybernetic Age," however, our experience of technology has made that robot seem irrelevant. Microelectronics has brought the machine down to size; those old gigantic pipes and cogs have been replaced by minuscule "components," working inaudibly. Thus domesticated, technology now *infiltrates* rather than invades. No longer appearing as an alien force, the machine is irresistible, blending in with the woodwork, as it were. And this change in style occurs just as the process of displacement begins to accelerate.

First of all, there is this simple fact of economics: robots and computers will soon throw a lot of human laborers out of work. "Of all the jobs in the industrial world today," writes the specialist in microelectronics, Adam Osborne, in *Running Wild: The Next Industrial Revolution*, "perhaps half will be eliminated during the next twenty-five years." Without futurological bombast, Osborne describes how microelectronics will eventually displace all clerks, typists, postal workers, telephone operators, stockbrokers, travel agents, and many teachers; the recording and film processing industries may disappear entirely. Although the champions of automation often promise that the machines will create as many jobs as they destroy, Osborne points out that this is false. The machines will need only a relative handful of technicians (known, in the parlance of computer specialists, as "servoprotein"), or else automation would not pay.

And the machine "unkings" us in a less obvious way. Contrary to McLuhan's ecstatic predictions, the advanced media have not extended our faculties; they have seemed to deplete them. Assisted by the calculator, our students forget how to add and subtract; the telephone diminishes our fluency by letting us neglect the practice of writing; television blinds us to any visual event that takes longer than an instant to comprehend, and keeps us sitting down, staying home. The continuing expansion of technology depends on our reciprocal exhaustion, as corporate engineers keep searching for more ways to computerize our functions. "The second industrial revolution, now in its infancy," boasts a spokesman for the National Science Foundation, "involves the transfer of intelligence from man to machine."

Meanwhile, we expect technology to rectify this situation. Sickened by industrial pollution, we look to be healed by more machines; machines can now reproduce, in any home, the sights and sounds of landscapes which other machines have long since blighted; adventurous types, their energies made superfluous by automation and TV, can now arm-wrestle with a robot, or try to ride a bucking robot-"horse," and so on. The apologists for robots claim that the new machines can liberate the worker from tedium and danger, but this assurance raises more questions than it answers. Why should the job be done at all? To build how many extra thousands of which superfluous machines? And once that worker is "liberated," what challenging job awaits him? Or will he have more "free time" to spend playing video games? In fact, technology appears to help us out of the very destruction it relentlessly causes.

As this process reaches ruinous perfection, the fear of robots undergoes an interesting change. Instead of simply epitomizing the evils of technology, the imaginary robot now comforts its desperate audience with a fantasy of manageability: C-3PO and R2-D2, the cute little "droids" of the *Stars Wars* cycle, have replaced the fearsome robots of the past in the popular imagination. This does not mean that Americans have abandoned their anxiety in favor of "mature acceptance." On the contrary: the persistence of this anxiety is precisely what underlies the appeal of these robots, which is based on the subtle denial that we have anything to fear from our machines.

We don't depend on our technology, *Star Wars* implies, so much as our technology depends on us. As our heroes roam through outer space, the little robots tag along like comical pets, loyal but cowardly, in need of repairs and reassurance. In fact, their masters could not do without them, but we overlook this fact because the robots display signs of powerlessness. They are small, more like extravagant toys than our sinister doubles, and therefore cannot threaten us with rivalry.

While the little robots would assuage our fears of modern technology, Darth Vader makes those fears seem justified. He is not a humanoid robot, but a robotic human being, and therefore a compelling symbol of man half-crippled by the mechanisms that are supposed to strengthen him. In his jackboots, black cloak, and gleaming *Wehrmacht* helmet, he seems a terrific tyrant, and yet this dominance is tempered by servility: he bullies his victims, but grovels before his emperor, and fears "the Force" which he has betrayed. This ambiguity (which has made Darth Vader a sort of cult hero among the devotees of S & M) arises from his overwhelming gadgetry. Encased in hardware, he seems invincible; and yet that fortress is also his burden. The dark silver "breath screen" that hides his face is both a warrior's visor and a penitent's mask, as if this colossus felt ashamed of the perishable thing inside the armor: at one point in *The Empire Strikes Back* as we see him putting on his headpiece, we glimpse the hidden scalp—shriveled and discolored, like a rotting apricot. This titan is half-dead in his accoutrements. The very props of his transcendence only call attention to his fraility; he never appears without that sound of labored breath, as in a diving bell or iron lung.

These figments are worth taking seriously, as the objects of a mass response which the proponents of expansion would deny. Although we are told that imaginary robots have nothing to do with those instruments now at work on the assembly lines, the two are profoundly related: the humanoid robot appeals to the fears aroused by technology at large, and by the remote powers

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in charge of that technology. Those who champion the use of robots tend to answer this uneasiness with a lot of upbeat, progressive rhetoric: "Now that we are no longer afraid of what the machine will do to us," gushes the author of *The Robot Book*, "we are freer to choose what we want the machine to do for us." This is the opposite of truth. In fact, we are still helpless "to choose what we want the machine to do for us," and therefore we are still afraid. The fear is so reasonable, moreover, that we ought to examine the motives of those who dismiss it, and ask what sort of world they have in mind. A world of busy, empty factories and busy, crowded shopping malls? We should think about that possibility, and do so with the courage of our instincts. The fear of robots has always been an aid to self-preservation; and so it will continue, as long as life is harmed no less than bettered by machines.

Who are 'the People'?

Populism
by Margaret Canovan

(Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; $17.95)

The need for a serious book on populism is most readily suggested by the inconsistency and confusion—not to say recklessness and irresponsibility—with which the term has been thrown around lately in American politics by politicians as well as by writers and scholars with pretensions of detachment. Jimmy Carter called himself a populist, and the label is also applied to Ronald Reagan and Jack Kemp. It has been applied to the movement led by Martin Luther King Jr., as well as to the one headed by George Wallace. Hardhats, grassroots fundamentalists, and spokesmen of every class across the spectrum of American society have been called populists. It is as readily used as a term of opprobrium as it is a term of approbation, and is called the direst menace as well as the surest salvation of democracy. Both the new left and the new right stake claims as its champions, and yet both on occasion use it as an epithet of abuse for opponents.

Looking backward and abroad for instructive instances only seems to add to the confusion, for these examples include radicals and reactionaries, dictators and democrats, socialists and conservatives, peasants and urbanites, all styles of politics and politicians and all degrees of involvement among intellectuals. Among the fantastic varieties of foreign populism are the Sinn Fein of Ireland, the Iron Guard of Romania, the Green Rebellion of Eastern Europe, Gandhi of India, Zapata of Mexico, Peron of Argentina, Vargas of Brazil, Belaúnde of Peru, Poujade of France, and Frantz Fanon of Africa, to mention only a few examples. And that leaves unmentioned the Muscovite mysteries of the *narodniki*, Russian founding fathers of populism and contemporaries of the first American party to bear the name "Populist."

On the nature and meaning of American populism, historians have increased the confusion by the striking differences between successive schools of interpretation. Historians of the 1930s who began the scholarly investigation of the subject (including the present writer) tended to regard the Populists as rational (as politics goes), their grievances as genuine and serious, their targets of criticism among the economic and political elite as legitimate, and some of their proposals for reform as ingenious and timely—on the whole a favorable and friendly picture of the agrarian rebellion of the 1890s.

In the 1950s this picture was replaced by an extremely hostile characterization of American "populism." Inspired by elitist theories that regarded the masses as ignorant, irrational, and authoritarian by nature, sociologists such as Edward A. Shils pictured populism as a menace to democracy. Influenced by this theory and alarmed for civil liberties by mass support of McCarthyite witch hunts, historians such as Richard Hofstadter reversed the interpretation of American Populists. In spite of historical evidence to the contrary, they identified Senator McCarthy as a descendant of the original Populists and some of the worst enemies of the Populists as authentic representatives of the movement. Populism so interpreted became the root of most that is retrograde, reactionary, irrational, racist, and abhorrent in the American political tradition. That view is still influential in some academic circles.

The swing back to populism in the academy nevertheless came with powerful impetus in the 1960s and 1970s. The student movement and the new left shared a conversion to "participatory" democracy that inspired a rebirth of faith in the people. Intellectuals found theory and evidence to justify the new faith and to reject the doctrine that the masses are fundamentally irrational, ignorant, and retrograde. They were instead the means of their own salvation and the revival of democracy. All they needed was leadership. But when the neopopulists went to the people to offer leadership, they found the whites lined up behind George Wallace, and the blacks, in time, behind the hostile nationalists.

What did "populism" mean, anyway? If a term is so ambiguous, has so many contradictory meanings, and spreads so much confusion as "populism" seems to be capable of, had it not better be abandoned? Margaret Canovan has her own answer to this question. After all, she writes,

> the term *does* exist: there it is, firmly ensconced in a number of languages, constantly used by scholars and journalists alike. We cannot get rid of it, and this book has been written in the belief that it need not be hopelessly confusing, and can indeed help us to identify political phenomena that are in need of study, provided that we take the trouble to disentangle the various strands entwined in its use.

An Englishwoman who is the author of a book on Hannah Arendt and another on G. K. Chesterton, Margaret Canovan evidently is not one easily upset by tangled strands and confused categories. She gives the reassuring impression of the sort of woman who can knit away from multiple batches of yarn, count the stitches, and carry on an animated conversation all at the same time. She points out that efforts to define socialism, liberalism, or conservatism also can run into difficulties. Each is "a family of related ideas" with internal contradictions rather than a single entity. Yet the range of diversity within populism is greater than it is within the others. One reason is that

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the others have been defined largely by adherents who share a common tradition, whatever their acrimonious differences, and the populists never had those advantages. The Americans originated the term "Populist" as the name of their party in the 1890s, and the Russians adopted it for better or worse as the translation of their term *narodniki*. Many movements elsewhere later called themselves something in other languages translatable as "populist" by analogy, but they never shared a common tradition, and there never has been a populist international.

On previous efforts to define populism Canovan quotes Sir Isaiah Berlin on "the Cinderella complex," the prince "always wandering about with the shoe" called "populism" looking for the foot it fits. Following his advice, she abandons the effort and seeks instead to characterize the phenomenon "in terms of a range of populisms with Wittgensteinian family resemblance between them." In fact, she identifies two families of populism. The first is an extended family of agrarian populisms, rural radicals, farmers, or peasants, in certain social and economic circumstances (modernization of some sort, usually) and a socio-economic program. The second broad family is not necessarily rural, and the emphasis is less upon social or economic conditions than upon political characteristics, devices to organize or hold together shaky coalitions of "the people" against elites.

One difficulty with this distinction, as Canovan admits, is overlapping and intermarriage between the two populist families. Another is the attitudes of intellectual elites (including academics) who interpret and classify such movements, especially when the movements are hostile to the intellectuals, who fear them, or when the intellectuals idealize or romanticize the common people. Both relationships are common, and tensions of some sort between populists and intellectuals are the rule rather than the exception. The situation has not made for detachment and clarity of characterization. As in the instance of US populists cited above, one often can hardly recognize the same movement in different accounts. Not only a typology of populisms but a typology of intellectuals is required.

In the agrarian branch of the populist families the author regards the Russian and the American movements "as paradigm cases of two sorts of recurrent rural radicalisms," yet very different in several ways. Both idealized "the people," but with sharp contrasts between both the idealizers and the people idealized. In Russia it was an alienated and conscience-stricken intelligentsia with ambivalent attitudes toward Westernization who idealized communal village life of peasants and furnished the bulk of adherents. They dreamed of indigenous socialism and sent a children's crusade of teenagers to the peasants. In America grassroots farmers did their own self-idealizing without much help or many adherents from the intellectuals and concentrated on cooperative marketing, buying, and credit as well as collectivization of transportation and banking. They warred against trusts, banks, railroads, plutocrats, the idle rich, and the corporate state that served these interests, and championed grassroots democracy. Populists along the Volga and those along the Mississippi remained mutually unacquainted.

Between Russian and American examples are numerous other varieties of agrarian populism with overlaps and kinships to both. The Green Uprising of peasants in Eastern Europe is found to be "the missing link between Russian and American populisms." With Russia they shared hopes for noncapitalist development for peasant countries, and with America the family farm and the cooperative as well as hostility to plutocrats and stress on grassroots democracy. But they bore blots of anti-Semitism and were radical only where land reform was concerned. More radical were the Zapatistas of Mexico, the Agrarian Union of Bulgaria, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in Canada, and a variety of agrarian movements in the third world, some with strong ethnic emphases. The range of rural radicalisms, from those of the intellectuals through peasants' to farmers' populisms, have a measure of continuity but no basic unity of outlook—with one exception. They all tend to idealize the people and to look on elites with hostility, even when it is an intellectual elite that provides the anti-elitism and the idealization of the people.

Canovan's other populist family group is described as political and cultural rather than agrarian, more urban than rural and less likely to share an economic or social base. She classifies them into four branches: populist dictatorships, populist democracies, reactionary populisms, and politicians' populisms. But the four branches are endlessly convoluted, intermarried, and wildly interrelated by alliances and overlappings. They flourish in Latin America with charismatic leaders but crop up everywhere, appealing to democratic impulses as well as to the darker passions of the masses.

Most conspicuous and notorious among this group are the populist dictatorships, modern Caesarism in which a charismatic leader builds a dictatorship by appealing over the heads of the established elite and the political system to "the people." Peron of Argentina is the Latin American prototype, and Huey Long of Louisiana the American variant. The rise of each can be explained in terms of rational class-interest and at the same time be seen as irrational mass phenomena transcending class definitions. Both men delivered tangible social benefits and rewards to followers and each exploited demagogic methods and repression in his own style.

"Populist democracy" may sound like a pleonasm, since democracy is by definition supposed to be government by the people. But this variety of populism arises in places where although "democracy" is the officially accepted norm, dissidents feel that democracy does not

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live up to its promise and are determined to make "government by the people" a reality. Movements of this character have flourished most readily in the United States and in Switzerland, with the latter as the prime and most genuine example. Standard devices of populist democracy are voter initiative, referendum, and recall, and the Swiss have added a sort of concurrent majority requirement reminiscent of John C. Calhoun.

Described by this English writer as "the most stridently populistic of nations" in most varieties of the phenomenon, the United States is rich in examples of reactionary populism as well. Canovan offers George Wallace of Alabama as typical, but concedes that Enoch Powell of Britain also qualifies, though his origins and style are wholly different. It is a curious irony that both should have coincided with a new wave of academic populism and its faith in the common man and grassroots participation. Blatantly anti-intellectual, reactionary populism pits the retrograde and irrational prejudices of the common man against the liberal commitments of the enlightened and thus widens the gap between "the people" and the elite. Canovan cautiously admits that rationality and irrationality are not all that neatly divided between elite and mass—a quarter of the Nazi SS elite reputedly held PhDs, and Enoch Powell was an ex-professor of classics.

The term "politicians' populism" is admittedly a "catchall" for parties and leaders who are "short on ideology, eclectic in their policies, and prepared to accept all comers," crossing classes and interest groups. As a rallying cry, "the people" surpasses all others in sheer vagueness and usefulness in blurring differences between party and class lines. It serves admirably for ex-colonial, one-party states of Africa and Asia. The original US Populists, as well as their Russian contemporaries, were too radical to use "politicians' populism," their appeal being more restricted than to "everyone." But the term readily applies to a variety of contemporary US politicians.

By way of conclusion the author points out that many actual populist phenomena belong in more than one of her seven categories, but that there are limits to the overlapping. For no one movement has ever been populist in all the senses defined and none could satisfy all conditions at once. While the seven elements can be combined in various ways, they can also be detached from one another. Reactionary populism need not breed dictators, and populist dictators are not necessarily reactionary. No effort to label populism generally as either right or left has been successful, for it can be either or neither. Nor can populists be invariably tagged with conspiracy theories—and such theories are not invariably false. Anti-elitist imagery—the rhetoric of the underdog and the pathos of the little man—is typical of all populisms and probably more significant than political scientists believe.

The reviewer has no doubt missed a few stitches in all this knitting, and the knitter has occasionally dropped one herself. She would cheerfully admit that she is a generalist, not a specialist, and is covering many countries, many periods, and many movements at second hand. The remarkable thing is her ability to knit away, keep her yarn untangled, and talk such good sense at the same time.

This is a timely book. The left is at last beginning to realize how far it has been misled by the abstractions underlying its efforts to lead and govern people. Industrialization and urbanization did not liberate the worker "from all traditional fetters," as Engels wrote, nor were men "effaced by their labor" in factories, nor were their particular identities and histories "obliterated," as Marx had it. As terrible as the ordeal of deracination was, it did not persuade people of the "idiocy of rural life," nor did it leave them without roots, "robbed of all real life-content," mere "abstract individuals."

Evidence of this pours in from around the world, from the third world as well as from Poland. The message is that people are never mere "workers." They have traditional ties to place, community, kin, club, union, church, and family, to rights and to something they call their history. They will fight for these values whether threatened from left or right. The study of populism is instructive about the consequences of condescension, arrogance, and ignorance on the part of elites and intellectuals. Margaret Canovan's *Populism* is a good place to begin that study.

C. Vann Woodward

C. Vann Woodward is professor of history emeritus at Yale University. His most recent book is *Mary Chesnut's Civil War* (Yale University Press).

Further Study Needed

Memorandum for the President: A Strategic Approach to Domestic Affairs in the 1980s By Ben W. Heineman Jr. and Curtis A. Hessler

(Random House; $17.95)

Ninety percent of the literature on government falls into two classes: 1) dull and worthless; 2) dull but worthy. This book belongs to the latter group.

It is worthy because in the process of making its case that presidential strategy in domestic affairs should concentrate on a handful of issues which are either likely to be manageable or are truly unavoidable, it says much that is useful about the problems and choices confronting the new administration.

It is dull because it is bureaucratic in spirit and language—not the vulgar bureaucratese of the GS-15, but the higher tone variety of *Foreign Affairs*. It is the language of the better class of assistant secretaries, which is not surprising, since the authors happen to be former assistant secretaries in the Carter administration.

Ben Heineman Jr., whose extensive résumé—Rhodes scholar, Supreme Court law clerk, etc.—was once celebrated in these pages as an example of meritocratic madness, was assistant secretary for planning and evaluation at HEW. His co-author, Curtis Hessler, another former Rhodes scholar, was assistant secretary for economic policy at the Treasury Department. Their analysis of what was wrong with the administration they served is for the most part accurate. For example, they are on target with their indictment of the separation of policy and politics under Carter. A James Schlesinger would formulate an unpassable energy

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program in isolation from the administration's chief politician, Hamilton Jordan. Why didn't Jordan get involved? Was it boredom? Insecurity? I suspect it was a little of the former and a lot of the latter, but the authors never say. They are not the kind of fellows who kiss and tell. I wish they were.

Former government officials should realize that if they aren't willing to kiss and tell, then they aren't going to be able to tell—really tell, in the sense of giving the full, human story behind the events they describe. There must be a fascinating story, for example, in the Califano-White House relationship, and Heineman probably knows it as well as anyone. Was Califano a victim of Jordan's policy of keeping bright people from having much access to Carter? Was this policy based on the insecurities of Jordan, of Carter, or of both men? If Jordan did play Iago, doesn't Califano remain an unlikely Desdemona? We are not told. The relationship between these men is not discussed.

That relationship does, however, seem to lie behind one of the book's more dubious points: its advocacy of cabinet government. "Carter should have let Joe alone" is translated into a recommendation that 75 percent of the issues confronting the government should be ceded to the cabinet officers. This would be sensible advice if cabinet officers were selected for knowledge and ability—but consider the case of the distinguished dentist who is now presiding over the Department of Energy largely because the Reagan people needed a cabinet member from the south—and if the issues confronting them did not cross department lines, as of course most important issues do.

Another reason the book is dull is that the authors approach the issues facing the nation as if they were wearing blinders by Brookings: the range of possible solutions is narrow, the proposed reforms incremental. On the critical problem of income maintenance, the authors clearly thought the Carter administration's attempt to take on even a small part of the problem, welfare, went too far. It never occurs to them to take on another, more serious part: the trillions of dollars in unfunded pension liability to public employees and Social Security retirees who don't need the money because they can still work or have adequate income from other sources.

Instead, they recommend that the president establish a permanent na-

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Nominations and Citations

How German Is It — Walter Abish
(New Directions)

The irony is so coolly controlled, the satire is so cutting in Walter Abish's novel, **How German Is It**, that its victim will go on a long time in the illusion of life. The German that just was, and the German that now is, are brought together like smarting palms, and the sound one hears is this remarkably *original, brilliantly executed work.*

The Transit of Venus — Shirley Hazzard
(Viking Press)

In language that is at once lush and finely tooled, Shirley Hazzard's meticulously made novel traces the arc of a woman's life as it passes through love to betrayal to resignation to renewal. **The Transit of Venus** is a work that combines telescopic breadth with a microcosmic precision of detail and insight.

The Second Coming — Walker Percy
(Farrar, Straus & Giroux)

With a philosopher's passion for ideas, and with a storyteller's insistence on the authentication of ideas in a particular human context, Walker Percy has written a moral drama of great intelligence, beauty and lasting significance. **The Second Coming** explores what may be the central question for modern man: in the absence of faith, what can we believe and what can we live for?

Aberration of Starlight — Gilbert Sorrentino
(Random House)

In **Aberration of Starlight**, with the customs, cliches and commodities of the Great Depression, and by means of highly disciplined technique and a sensitive imagination, Gilbert Sorrentino has managed to invest a single, rather commonplace event, and the four very ordinary people involved in it, with a desperate and aching significance and a sadness filled with smiles.

A Confederacy of Dunces — John Kennedy Toole
(Louisiana State University Press)

A Confederacy of Dunces is a richly gifted novel, large in intention, and extraordinarily finished in execution. It is a strange, comic invention which roams around New Orleans in the manner of an instrument that can detect and record everything in its path. The novel was written in the 1960s, and, after the death of the young author in 1969, was still unpublished until it was read by Walker Percy, whose enthusiasm promoted its publication in 1980. *We, fortunately, have this novel now — and it will not disappear.*

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tional advisory council. This is the "further study" solution bureaucrats love. What the president really should do is put the pension problems at the top of his present agenda of issues to explain to the public; then he can begin to build the kind of support he needs for the actions that must be taken in a few years if we are to avoid national bankruptcy.

Some problems the authors either don't face or dismiss because they don't think anything can be done about them. An example is the paralyzing effect of the separation of powers. The founding fathers did not want a government that worked, except for national defense. They therefore stuck us with an adversary relationship between Congress and the executive that has confined action on the domestic front to two brief periods—1933-36 and 1964-66—in modern history. Again we have a difficult problem, one that seems likely to require constitutional change—but unless it is faced, unless the president begins to educate the public, unless he explains the problem to the people in a way that generates support for change, we will continue to see presidential failure on the domestic front with an occasional exception like the brief flurries under FDR and LBJ.

Another necessity for domestic success is the restoration of the political parties in order to give presidents a power base independent of the special interests that have been so successful in thwarting administration initiatives in recent years. And there must be restoration of political control over the civil service. The authors seem to be getting ready to take this one on when they discuss the failure of the Carter administration to understand the relationship between politics and policy. But Heineman and Hessler then proceed to ignore the problem of the parties and to mention civil service reform only once, six pages from the end of the book, and then as if it were an accomplished fact. The truth is that we don't have accountability in this country because the government is run by people who are neither elected nor removable by elected officials. We have a government that is more bureaucratic than democratic. Until that is changed, the kind of presidential strategies recommended by Heineman and Hessler can't have much effect.

I have been an observer of life in Washington for 20 years. I've seen a lot of Heinemans and Hesslers—able, bright young people I would like to have as my own assistants if I were in office. The one thing they lack is experience in the trenches of life. They have not known what it is like to be on welfare, to work in a coal mine, to serve as enlisted men, to be down and out. They do not have the human feel of the policy problems they discuss around Washington conference tables. Thus, when Heineman and Hessler discuss evaluation of federal programs, their advice is lifeless:

> Evaluation is necessary at an operational level to help define objectives, and once objectives are chosen, to ensure that they are being carried out. As we have noted, the Congress often leaves the question of a program's precise objectives fuzzy. Accordingly, evaluation techniques can help provide greater definition when, as is often the case, there is significant flexibility or ambiguity in definition. Evaluators must work with operators to carry out the interactive process of definition and measurement.

The authors seem unaware that there are human beings out there whose health, hopes, and lives might depend on decisions made in Washington. A new book that does have that human feeling, a book that is absolutely must reading, is *One-Third of a Nation* (University of Illinois Press), a compilation of Lorena Hickok's reports to Harry Hopkins and Eleanor Roosevelt of what was actually happening in the field with the New Deal's relief programs. Every government agency should have such reports. Unfortunately none does. At the best they get things like *Memorandum to the President*. It's must reading, too, but it will never make your blood boil or your heart break the way Lorena Hickok's book does. And that's too bad.

Charles Peters

Charles Peters is editor of the *Washington Monthly*.

Coming:

Wallace Stegner

on Water in the West.

The Social Roots of Evil

The Nazi Question: An Essay on the Interpretations of National Socialism (1922-1975)
by Pierre Ayçoberry
translated by Robert Hurley

(Pantheon Books; $15.95, $6.95 paper)

What was Hitler, and why? It is an irresistibly fascinating question and Pierre Ayçoberry, a noted French historian, has tried in this succinct and often shrewd work to sum up the various answers.

Even though he tries to take other points of view seriously, his starting point, and indeed the backbone of the book, lies in Marxism. What did Marxists make of Hitler, who defeated them so badly? The early Marxist response to Hitler was that he was the representative of the capitalists and the bourgeoisie in decline. Capitalism was collapsing, the Third International argued (in 1932-33), and the classes with property needed a dictatorship to keep the workers from rebelling. Variations of that argument have cropped up ever since. It did have an obvious element of truth. After all, organized labor—whether political parties or trade unions—supplied the Nazis with their first target. When Hitler became chancellor in 1933 there was even a revealing scene in Düsseldorf, when Nazis invaded the local social welfare offices, dragged out the various (left-wing) social security clerks, and sheared off their long hair.

The voters of Hitler's party—the figures were collected and brilliantly analyzed long ago by Theodor Geiger—came obviously enough from the propertied classes. Small farmers in the Protestant north gave Hitler about half of his votes, and the rest came mainly from petit bourgeois areas in the towns. You would expect bank clerks to

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be Nazi, though not bank managers. Ayçoberry does not discuss why these people were Nazi, nor does he say in any detail what happened to them in the slump. But the fact was that they were united in blaming their woes on high taxes, prodigal social security measures, wicked foreigners, profiteering monopolies, and especially the trade unions. Germany's trade unions were strong and they were given such legal privileges that the kinds of wage-flexibility and labor-mobility that the country needed to recover from the slump were seriously impeded. Indeed, when the trade unions were asked, after 1945, if they wanted such privileges again, they rejected the offer, to no obvious harm. Perhaps, too, they appreciated that if labor organizations behave stupidly enough in bad times, they are likely to incur hostility.

The Marxist writers discussed here were helpful, then, in some ways. At least they got us away from saying that nazism was nazism because Germans were irremediable. But the Marxists have also led us down several paths that have not turned out to be very useful. Historians during the past two decades have spent an unconscionable time trying to discover whether the industrial bosses "invented" Hitler. It has taken the patience and common sense of Henry A. Turner at Yale to demonstrate that the industrialists were as divided as everyone else, and that, in any case, "the small man" and his votes and contributions did most for the Nazis. Ayçoberry ought to have mentioned Turner's important work, inconvenient though it may be. Then again, we have found ourselves asking over and over how "proletarian" the Nazis were. Hitler's paramilitary force, the SA, was made up of rowdies—dismissed as "proletarians" by most middle-class observers. We have found ourselves asking about the social origins of these rowdies: were they factory proletarians in Marx's sense, or were they rather "artisans"—cobblers, tailors, etc.—of the kind that economic modernization and industrial concentration is (quite wrongly) supposed to have been destroying? Not surprisingly, the answers to this kind of question have become more and more complicated, and reveal less and less.

On the whole, this book is very depressing. The grand interpretations of nazism often turn out to be waffle. There is a notorious school of "psychohistory" which tried to explain nazism in terms of an authoritarian father-complex. Erich Fromm's *Escape From Freedom* is the best-known work to come from that school. Like much psychoanalytical work, it concentrates excessively on the individual at the expense of the social. There was Wilhelm Reich, who tried to "explain" nazism in terms of sexual frustration. Now there may well be some kind of link between communism and father-fixation and between fascism and mother-fixation—though it is no more than a guess, and an unprovable one at that—but the last thing that can be said of most of the chief Nazis was that they were sexually frustrated. Goebbels was a notorious womanizer; some of Hitler's chief lieutenants—Bormann, Streicher, even Himmler and Heydrich—led irregular sex lives; even the allegedly puritanical Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, "Reich Mother-in-Chief," had three husbands and, it was said, an affair with her boss as well. Hitler himself is a different case. No one knows what his sex life was, though obviously there was not very much of it. The same could probably be said of Neville Chamberlain, Woodrow Wilson, Ramsay MacDonald. So what?

There is a vast problem in the history of the Third Reich: why it got worse. As the 1930s progressed, the regime became more prosperous and popular (though that has been denied by the more pertinaciously ostrich-minded Marxist historians) and yet its practice became harsher, less predictable, and more warlike. In most countries, prosperity leads to greater relaxation—as it did in, say, the Second Empire or Franco's Spain. In Nazi Germany, this did not happen. On the contrary, the fate of the Jews grew worse from 1933 onward. This is not a question that Ayçoberry discusses, and one can see why, for it probably requires a good old-fashioned concern with matters of morality, not a confused chasing of hares round the difficult field of German industrial capitalism.

On two points of substance, Ayçoberry is misleading. He writes off A. J. P. Taylor's *Origins of the Second World War* as "discredited"; he seems to suppose that it was written purely out of devilment. Admittedly Taylor's account has its faults: in particular, it made out that the post-Munich Czechoslovakia broke up more or less by itself with little help from Hitler. But it was distinguished by its attention to the docu-

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ments, and Taylor's account of the *Anschluss*, Hitler's union with Austria, is still the best one available, short as it is. Taylor does not have a thesis to propound. He would only say that historians are like painters: they record, and leave others to draw conclusions. He has a more powerful brain than most of the pretentious trumpeters whom Ayçoberry surveys.

Ayçoberry is misleading on another point. He seems to think that Hitler deliberately managed his economy with a view to "lightning-wars," that he did not really prepare for a long war because he expected only short ones, won by tanks and aircraft. That theory suits some of his Marxist interpreters of the subject. It happens to be quite wrong. Hitler did not get arms in any great quantity, but that was because his state machinery was (despite talk) not very good at procuring them. There is a connection between wickedness and failure: which is as well for us all.

Norman Stone

Norman Stone teaches at Trinity College, Cambridge, and is the author of *Hitler* (Little Brown).

Put the Blame on Mame

Dad
by William Wharton

(Knopf; $12.95)

You feel like a bum for not being moved by a novel like *Dad*. It's an exploitation machine about a middle-aged son nursing his sick and dying parents. Since most of us either have faced or will soon face this, we're suckers for a novel that, on the one hand, teases our fears and guilts yet, on the other, renders even the bedpan scenes bearable by making the son loving, competent, and inexhaustible—just the way we would want to be in his shoes.

How can an author miss with material like this? Buoyed by the son's sterling example, we should finish *Dad* with our fears purged and our hopes renewed, ready to face the second worst thing in life. But we don't—or I didn't, and my advice to you is *caveat emptor*—because William Wharton is so busy establishing the son's ability to handle the situation that its full awfulness never registers with us. It doesn't seem to get him down, so why should it bother us? The emphasis is on coping, not on anguish, either his or his parents'. Scenes that should be rending emerge as flat behavioral descriptions. Perhaps we're supposed to understand that the son's flat voice is his way of distancing himself, but since it's a first-person narrative we get the story only through him, and if he's distanced, so are we. Wharton may have gone behaviorist to avoid sentimentality, but why work against your material like that? We're ready to weep when we open a novel with a title like *Dad*, so why not push us beyond sentimentality into something deeper and more complicated?

Dad is framed by two telegrams of equally dreadful import. The first informs Jack Tremont, a 52-year-old American expatriate artist in France, that his mother has had a serious heart attack. Immediately he flies to Los Angeles expecting to help his sister deal with his mother's funeral. The second telegram, which reaches him in Philadelphia months later, informs him that his father has died. Between the telegrams lie 350 pages of medical and psychiatric reportage relieved only by displays of Jack's moral athleticism.

Jack has to show his stuff right away. Within days of his arrival in Los Angeles, his mother has another attack. She is no sooner hospitalized than Dad finds blood in his urine and goes into shock when a crude doctor tells him it means cancer. Dad is hospitalized, comes home in Jack's care, and is soon hospitalized again, this time worse than ever. Meanwhile, Mom is recovering. And now Dad too recovers. Mom now declines. Dad briefly flourishes; indeed, quite implausibly, he turns into a new man. But soon the strain of accommodating his new identity—this former Douglas aircraft plant worker turns into a counterculture sage—to Mom's expectations that he stay the same old Dad breaks his tenuous health. He sickens rapidly, and dies.

The cause of Dad's death is not exactly clear but the text suggests it's Mom, who is depicted as a fanged harridan, a real life-hater. Here Wharton is following the profitable lead of Judith Guest, who gave us the loving father/killer-mother duo as *Ordinary People*. Add Mrs. Kramer of *Kramer vs. Kramer* to this list of hard mamas, and you have the makings of a ponderous generalization about the state of our culture which, however, I shall leave to the Arts and Leisure section of the Sunday *Times*.

Dad is bound to be praised as "daring" or—God help us—"experimental" because it features three narrative voices. The largest part of the book belongs to Jack, who sounds like this:

> Mom sucks in her breath when I mention the cystoscopic; this is something she knows. She's had trouble with her bladder since I was born. It's something she's never let me forget: 'I ruined her insides.'

Jack is joined at Dad's by the second narrator, his son, Billy, a 19-year-old dropout from the University of Santa Cruz (about which he wittily observes: "They use a pass-no record system, meaning either you pass or it didn't happen: You can't fail."). In alternating chapters Billy narrates, his subject being the drive he and Jack make back east after all hope has been lost for Dad's recovery. Billy's voice, like his father's, is clipped and lean. The sole poetic note in the novel and, in fact, the only writing of any rhetorical appeal belongs to the third voice, Dad's. Periodically, Jack will wonder what Dad is thinking and an italicized passage like this one will then follow:

> Plowing for sod corn, new cut, ground turned close, one now cuts the other, small tufts of grass and reeds making the depth of furrows. Jimmy pulls, slowly, easily; and I lean, strong enough to turn over the topsoil: corduroying the earth.

There is no Jimmy; he is imaginary. Dad has dreamed up a whole world for himself over the years, a place to hide when Mom is too much with him.

It's at least a poignant idea—that a factory worker who was brought up on a farm would long to have a farm of his own. However, when Dad goes on to describe this dream farm, locate it in Cape May, New Jersey, number its chickens and hogs and fenceposts, and

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tell us how far it is from Philadelphia, poignancy rapidly fades. Did Wharton think this ludicrously explicit fantasy could be moving? Perhaps not, since it is the clinical aspect of Dad's secret life that seems to interest him. Thus he has Jack take Dad to the main modern enemy of poetic suggestion, a psychiatrist: Dad is a "successful schizophrenic." You could look it up in R. D. Laing.

Late in the novel, Jack asks himself, "What is it that keeps fathers and sons so far apart?" Since he gave Jack that line, Wharton must think that what he is showing here is the distance between his fathers and sons. But he must have lost control of his material, because nature rarely has witnessed less ambivalence between fathers and sons. Next to these guys, the cuddly father and son from *Ordinary People* look like fugitives from the *Brothers Karamazov*. Jack bears no discernible scars from the struggle to get free of his father: his love for Dad is full and unclouded. Dad himself begins lovable and grows more so, until he becomes quite insufferable. Jack is lovable too; and you can bet Billy loves him. So for all *Dad's* naturalistic detail, its inventory of excretions and eructations, it is a romance, what Ann Douglas has called a "male weepie." The separate narratives are linked by mere structural ironies—Billy is shocked that Jack uses Seconal just as Jack is shocked when Dad tries pot—not the cruel ironies of character that make "autonomy" a bitter word. To get the shadow of our fathers off our lives and yet still love them—that is the conflict faced by most men and women. But you'd never know it from *Dad*. Its predecessor, the much praised *Birdy*, was called "magical," and that helpless adjective will doubtless be pasted on *Dad*. There is magic in it, all right, but it is not in Dad's Cape May fantasy world. It's in Wharton's Edenic pictures of fathers and sons.

He makes the men dears but gives Mom lines like: "If that wop [her son-in-law] thinks he can keep me from eating with my own daughter and my grandchildren, then he has another thing coming. I'll tell you that!" Meanwhile, Dad is coming on like Erich Segal: "Loving, more than anything, means letting people do the things they have to do." He's such a swell guy. Why, though, is Mom a stinker?

If Wharton goes on the talk show circuit, somebody is sure to ask him. He'll probably reply that she had all these traumas as a kid which soured her nature. But his text shows a more proximate cause: it's a response to the way the men in her life have treated her, which is like a troublesome pet. Jack, for example, is a regular ringmaster, forever congratulating himself on his skill in handling Mom. "Mom keeps talking over my first sentence, but then shuts up. If I'd talked to her directly she'd have kept on, only louder. Using a carom shot, talking to Dad, has her buffalowed." And, again:

> All right, there, Mom, at least take a little rest at Joan's. You've been saying all along you're afraid of Dad, that he's going to kill you or something; so you go there and I'll stay with him.
>
> I've mousetrapped her. . . .

He clucks over that ploy, then reflects, "Now's the time to go into my lying routine." As we go down the page we descend the moral scale. "I'll settle back to watch her wiggle." When Mom starts to lose faith in Dad's recovery, Jack gets her where she bleeds, in her Catholic conscience, by telling her that despair is the worst sin of all. That shuts the old girl up pronto!

After seeing Jack snap the whip we can easily imagine that Dad has been bouncing his own carom shots off Mom for 50 years. His technique at least is subtle. For instance: Dad has long wanted a couch at the Salvation Army store, but has been afraid of what Mom would say if it should suddenly show up in her living room. So he takes Mom to the store and baits a trap for her with a show of gallantry: "Johnny, we're probably wearing mother out with all this coming and going; let's sit down on this nice-looking couch here and take a little rest." He pretends it's Mom who discovers the couch and by this strategem foxes her into buying it. Yuk. Yuk.

This is odious. Is Wharton unaware of what he's showing us? He gives every sign of being in the dark. Without perceptible irony, for example, he has the smarmy psychiatrist ("My background is Catholic and I recognize some of his projection as evil") pin this diagnosis on Mom. "She's certainly suspicious of me, she's suspicious of your father, of you, of your sister. There doesn't seem to be anybody she trusts; she's completely alone, a deeply frightened woman." Yes, and she's got a lot to be suspicious about! we want to shout at this shrink, and at Wharton, too, who seems not to have read his own novel. And who can blame him? *Dad* is for people who hate Mom.

Jack Beatty

Brief Reviews

The Killing of Karen Silkwood by Richard Rashke

(Houghton Mifflin; $11.95)

The saga of Karen Silkwood is the left's favorite conspiracy , and it's easy to see why. It has all the elements conspiracy buffs need to practice their peculiar art: beginning with a mysterious death and ending with an official report that raises more questions than it answers. Not that a healthy dose of suspicion isn't justified. Karen Silkwood was a union activist working for a Kerr-McGee nuclear processing plant in Oklahoma. She was worried over the company's shoddy handling of plutonium, and her efforts to do something about it were not winning her many friends in the company. There is no question at all that before her death she had been purposely contaminated with plutonium, and that her urine samples had been doctored with the stuff (presumably to frighten her). And the events surrounding her death were weird, to say the least: she was driving that night in November 1974 to a meeting with a reporter for the *New York Times*, supposedly with a satchel full of documents incriminating Kerr-McGee for violating health and safety standards (by exposing its workers to dangerously high levels of plutonium) as well as falsifying production reports. On the way to the meeting, her car veered off a highway she drove every day and crashed. The documents never were found; the accident report was hopelessly botched; there were a host of other details about the accident that didn't add up. As a result, the theory sprang up that she somehow was forced off the road by another vehicle—that she was murdered, in other words. Nobody since has been able to show that this is more than a theory.

In tackling a book about Silkwood, then, one's first inclination is to think "here we go again." That, as it turns out, is unjustified. Richard Rashke has done an admirable job of separating what is fact in the case from what is supposition, what is theory from what is documented evidence. For that alone, his book is valuable. He takes us from the time Silkwood first began worrying about health hazards posed by pluto-

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nium, through the many and varied investigations, and ends his account on the day five years after she died when an Oklahoma jury ordered Kerr-McGee to pay $10.5 million in damages to the Silkwood estate after finding the company guilty of negligence.

Though clear, concise, and understandable, Rashke's book leaves little doubt that he has been bitten by the conspiracy bug as much as anyone else who's ever written about the case. Although he is willing to separate the facts from the theories, it is clear that he finds the theories more intriguing. One unfortunate result is that he devotes hefty chunks of an otherwise worthy book to anyone who has an alternative explanation for Silkwood's death. A psychic gets a page to explain how she dreamt that Silkwood was murdered. Considerable space is given over to the journalistic musings of Howard Kohn, who covered the story for *Rolling Stone*. Kohn believes—and has written—that Kerr-McGee's secret was that a plutonium smuggling ring was operating out of the plant, and Silkwood was killed because she found out about it. To put it kindly, this seems a bit farfetched.

Because there are these two strains working throughout the book—one of fact, and one of theory—Rashke finds himself in the odd position at the end of having to write two conclusions. The first is dispassionate, based on the outcome of the court case: "But there was no hard evidence [that Silkwood was murdered], and there were no real suspects. Just possibilities and theories." The second, which is what he really believes, is that "Karen Silkwood was run off the road, and the FBI knows who did it to her." This is based on a conversation an investigator friend of Rashke's had with a source in the FBI (to whom Rashke does not have access), who told the investigator he had glanced at one page of the top-secret Silkwood file and was now repeating what he remembered he had read on the page. It purports to give an account of her "murder."

Well, maybe. But after reading Rashke's book, you can't help thinking that it is at least as likely that she simply ran off the road and crashed. That's just as logical as any other explanation, even if it does, admittedly, spoil all the intrigue as well as leave a lot of loose ends. With loose ends inevitably come troubling circumstances, holes in the story, unexplained events, and all those other things that bug conspiratorialists. Life, they forget, is mostly like that.

Joseph Nocera

Joseph Nocera is a contributing editor of the *Washington Monthly*.

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A Handsome Man by Susan Cheever

(Simon & Schuster; $12.95)

A Handsome Man should not have been a novel; it would have worked better as a short story, a vignette, or even an excursus within a vignette. Cheever's writing is adequate but, except for brief passages where she captures a mood or a thought with telling precision, the book is exceedingly dull. Nothing happens. It is like a faded color photograph: a brief moment of reality is accurately reproduced, but there is no movement or excitement.

The handsome man of the title is Sam Noble, a 50-year-old divorced president of a New York publishing firm, who is romancing 32-year-old Hannah Bart, a publicity agent for another New York publisher. She learns Sam has a teenage son, Travis, whom he has not seen for years. Hannah wants Sam to attempt a reconciliation with Travis, a high school dropout and drifter, and Sam, though at first resistant, agrees to have his son meet him in Ireland and asks Hannah to join them there. The book relates what happens during the visit to Ireland, which is very little—several pleasant car rides; numerous meals, both good and bad; and more detailed descriptions of fly-fishing than I hope ever to read again.

Travis proves to be just as angry and arrogant as expected, but Sam tries to establish a close relationship. Hannah and Travis, on the other hand, do not like each other at all; each is jealous of Sam's affection for the other. Hannah and Travis vie for Sam's attention throughout the book—and throughout all those drives, meals, and fly-fishing excursions—until the end when all three leave Ireland, Sam and Hannah to become engaged, and Travis to return to his mother's home.

What little action Cheever does allow occurs just before the departure from Ireland. The incident, however, requires the willing suspension of disbelief: Travis and Hannah, still not getting along, have a remarkably brief assignation—taking no more than a minute to read and, as described, less time to accomplish. Considering that they didn't like each other very much before, after, or even during the episode, it is probably the most unlikely seduction in literature since Richard III exclaimed about Lady Anne, "Was ever woman in this humor wooed, was ever woman in this humor won."

Cheever appends an epilogue, which I still don't understand: it tells us in detail how Travis trained for and ran in the Boston marathon. It made me yearn for the fly-casting.

Joan Shaffer

Correspondence, *from page 5*

than a dilettante. This means learning a discipline (as opposed to the travesty of "majoring" in one) and being free to pursue one's educational ambitions seriously at the earliest stage.

Steven L. Ross
Hunter College, CUNY
New York, New York

The editors welcome correspondence from *TNR*'s readers. Letters intended for publication should include the correspondent's full name, address, and telephone number, should be typed double-spaced, and held to under 200 words. Longer letters may be abridged due to lack of space.

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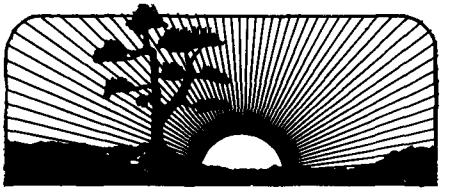

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Washington Diarist

Mr. Nice Guy

Before he became national security adviser, Richard Allen was a Mr. Fixit for hire to international businesses that wanted to be on good terms with the government. Charges during his confirmation period that Allen didn't seem to know the difference between the government's interest and the interests of his clients were dismissed as Watergate atavisms. Allen has been lying low, but he popped into the news last week with a report that he had helped arrange a series of meetings with top administration officials, in government buildings, for 100 foreign businessmen who were paying $3,000 for the privilege. Not to Allen, of course, but to the *National Journal*, a magazine with a sideline arranging such affairs. The *National Journal* had paid Charls Walker, Washington's premier business lobbyist, to persuade the administration to cooperate, and Walker had contacted Allen, who was nice enough to help out. Besides an undisclosed retainer, Walker got $5,000 for delivering a speech at the conference. Charls Walker is essentially Richard Allen out of office, which is what makes the whole arrangement kosher. What irritates me is the knowledge that (a) some day Richard Allen will be out of office, and will be doing precisely this sort of thing, probably with many of the same people; and (b) some day Charls Walker may well be back in office (he's a former assistant secretary of the treasury), where he will be in a position to help Richard Allen, and anybody who points out this unsavory possibility during his confirmation period will be accused of Watergatery, if not McCarthyism.

Great Moments in Law: Billie Jean King announces that her decision to acknowledge an affair with her female secretary was taken against the advice of her lawyer. Having previously helped to draft a statement denying the affair, the lawyer no doubt assumed that Billie Jean had decided to tell a lie when she suddenly changed her tune, a sort of uncover-up. Surely a member of a profession dedicated to the truth could not have wanted to leave a public falsehood uncorrected.

There's nothing like having influence. Following an epic-length pan in these pages, George Gilder's *Wealth and Poverty* shot to the top of the Washington nonfiction best-seller list, and has sat there ever since. And speaking of no accounting for taste, William Morrow has now published a book on that theme called *Human Sacrifice: In History and Today*, by the anthropologist Nigel Davies. These should be seen as companion volumes, since Gilder, among many novel insights, points out the close connection between high tax rates and human sacrifice. Oddly, Davies does not mention high tax rates in his otherwise exhaustive survey of decapitation, live burial, dismemberment, human bonfires, mass drownings, and similar practices. Nevertheless, his book is required reading for anyone who takes Gilder seriously. Davies's approach is best described as sanguine, in every sense. "I hope the reader will bear with a good many gory details," he says with cheery disingenuousness. The author, for one, does not let the gore get him down. Although there is almost nothing in the book to support the title reference to human sacrifice "today" (for that, one must turn to Gilder), the title does reflect Davies's genial attitude that the desire for ritual slaughter is an inevitable, almost endearing human foible, and, as the flap copy points out, "has always been carried out with noble intentions." Who among us, for example, has not felt "the universal urge to bury people under new buildings"? One of Davies's most poignant anecdotes concerns a king who tried to achieve immortality with an elixir concocted of 2,000 hearts of doves and 6,000 human hearts. "The story has a sad ending; the magic did not work. . . ." Most of the barbs are reserved, however, not for practitioners of human sacrifice, but for those who take too superior an attitude toward it, and for scholarly competitors, whose studies, Davies complains, "often lapse into mere cookbooks." Cannibalism, he reminds us, is only one way of cleaning up afterward. Why, there's . . . but I can't ask my readers to bear with any more gory details. Anyone that interested in supply-side economics will just have to buy the book.

After a recent small operation to remove an unwanted lump, the doctor told me, "We have the final lab report, and you are completely benign." Experts will immediately recognize that my doctor was practicing a rare version of the literary technique known as synecdoche, wherein, rather than using the part to represent the whole (the favored approach of most synecdochists), one uses the whole to represent the part. On my next visit perhaps he will experiment with metonymy, an even more sophisticated technique "consisting of the use of the name of one thing for that of another of which it is an attribute or with which it is associated" (*Tarnower's Dictionary of Medical Terms*). Onomatopoeia, antonomasia, catachresis, tralatition . . . thank God I carry health insurance, because the bills for this sort of thing can really mount up. In England, I understand, there is a six-month wait for the simplest simile or metaphor, and anyone who needs anything as advanced as litotes ("understatement in which an affirmative is expressed as the negative of the contrary") must pay exorbitant fees to a private clinic, or do without. One famous skeptic about the application of synecdoche to tumors was Evelyn Waugh. Upon hearing that his friend Randolph Churchill had undergone surgery for removal of a lung, which also turned out to be not malignant, he wrote in his diary: "It was a typical triumph of science to find the only part of Randolph that was not malignant, and remove it." This, of course, is not a medical diagnosis at all, but an illustration of the great legal maxim, *inclusio unius exclusio alterius* (roughly, "inclusion of one implies exclusion of all others"), and therefore not relevant to our discussion here.

Synecdoche aside (where it belongs), I remain the only *New Republic* writer who has been certified completely benign. Some readers had begun to express doubts. Now I'm in a similar position to my idol John Connolly. Thanks to a jury verdict acquitting him of corruption charges, Connolly was able to go around during the 1980 presidential campaign claiming that he was the only candidate who had been certified innocent. My certification of benignity is especially useful at the moment, since the operation has left me, temporarily, with a sort of built-in scowl. One colleague said, "Now you look the way you write." A sobering thought. The special hazards of opinion journalism—primarily the risk of running into people you've written about—put a premium on appearing sweet and lovable. If my face doesn't reorder itself soon, I may have to think about becoming a nicer person. Perhaps I should apply for Social Security. If that isn't a job-related disability in my line of work, what is?

M. E. K.

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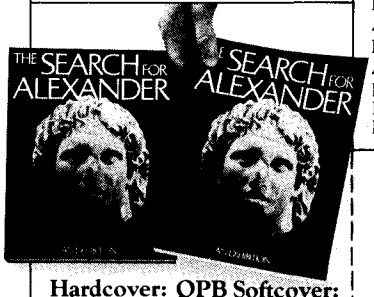

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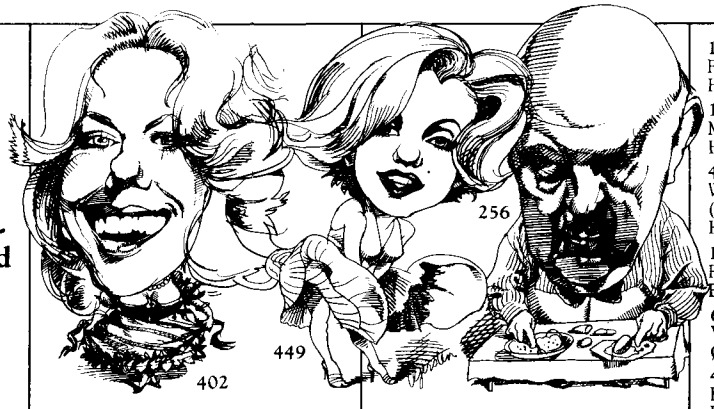

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